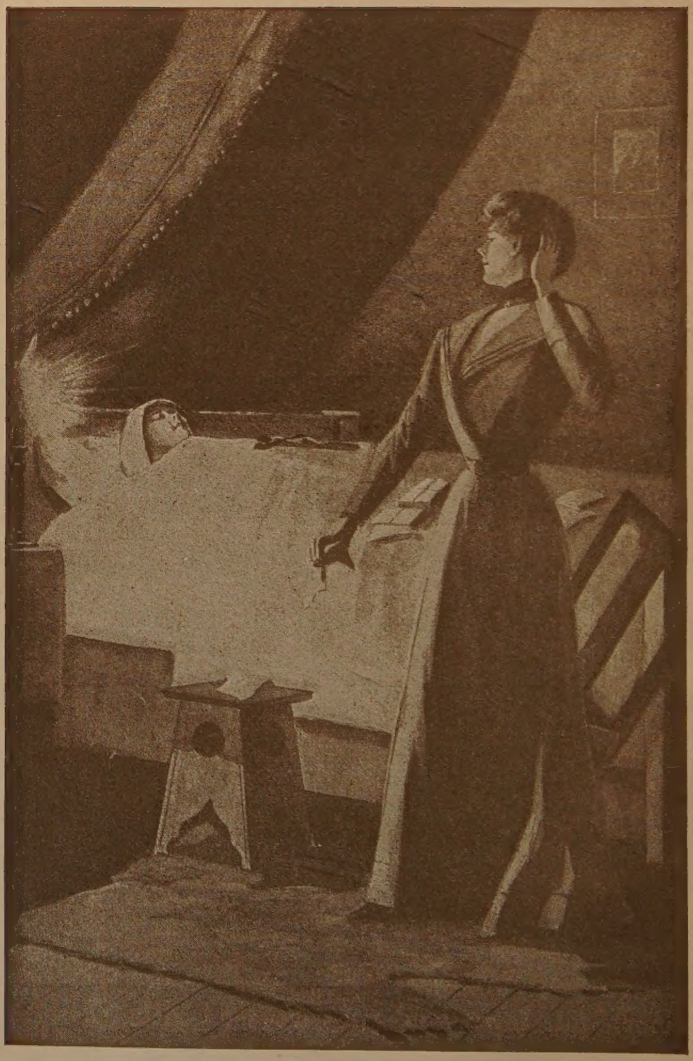

Sister Eulalie, her eyes dry now, was still standing near the bed.—*The Letters.*

Selected Stories

of

Guy de Maupassant

Translated and Edited by

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PREFACE

HENRI René Albert Guy de Maupassant was born in France, August 5, 1850, at the Château de Miromesnil, Department of the Lower Seine. He was educated chiefly at the Rouen Lycée, and later was employed about fifteen years in the Admiralty Office in Paris. He became a friend and disciple of Gustave Flaubert, with whom he was connected by marriage. That great stylist encouraged his brilliant pupil to write, and the youth was a frequent visitor and keen observer at the famous gatherings held in Flaubert's little house at Croisset, meeting such master spirits as Daudet, Zola, Heredia, the Frères De Goncourt, and George Sand. De Maupassant called Flaubert his literary godfather, and when his first real success came, with the publication of that vivid little sketch "Boule de Suif" ("Ball-of-Suet"), his severe but kindly mentor wrote to him: "You have produced a masterpiece, young man. Decidedly, if you keep on in this way, you will become a great writer."

The young romancer took an active part in the Franco-Prussian War, and his experiences during that period suggested to him some of the most powerful of his stories.

In his brief but brilliant career, De Maupassant succeeded in making himself known as the master of short-story writing: merciless in his analysis of the life of the higher classes, photographic in his presentation of the

simple-minded country folk and the prosaic bourgeoisie whom he understood so well. Although his novels rank high as pictures of French society life, it is his short stories that make the strongest appeal to all tastes.

In the flush of his success, and eager to win fresh triumphs, De Maupassant urged his genius too far, and sacrificed his health to his desire for fame. In order to counteract the effects of overwork, he dallied with drugs, which, while stimulating him to the production of some of his finest tales, brought on intense nervousness and finally a lesion of the brain, for which he was treated in a sanatorium for two years before his death, which occurred July 6, 1893.

The writings of De Maupassant are well fitted to play an important part in the work of civilization. They do not recommend any virtue, it is true; they do not dwell upon any; they neither assume nor fulfil any high instructive office; but they are clear, exact, precise, satiric pictures of realities, and surely exactitude and truth, pointed with wholesome satire, should serve a useful purpose. It is a strange fact that, while a clergyman is praised for drawing in his sermons the liveliest pictures of human error and weakness, the same persons that applaud these efforts hesitate to approve when a romancer paints the same pictures in his own colors. But De Maupassant never feared to hold the mirror up to weakness and folly; vanity, egotism, moral feebleness, lack of idealism, stupidity, selfishness—all these traits he has presented in a way possibly unflattering to the race in general, but one not unworthy the study of the strictest moralist. The world's great satirists—Rabelais, Molière, Flaubert, De Maupassant—are the real salt of society, which certainly does not eradicate the taint of worldly corruption, but

without which society would probably be much worse than it is. In his wonderful pictures of life, and of human imperfections, the care De Maupassant took not to overstep the truth was prompted by genuine moral instinct quite as much as by literary tact. The world owes him a debt of gratitude, not only as a prince of entertainers, but as a writer in whose work the admixture of beneficial bitterness acts as a salutary draught to regulate the conscience and the vanity of mankind.

Dora K. Ramsay

BALL-OF-SUET

(*Boule de Suif*)

DETACHMENTS of a defeated army had been passing through the town for several days. They were only disorganized bands, not disciplined troops. The men wore long, dirty beards and ragged uniforms; they marched listlessly, without flag or leader. All appeared exhausted, incapable of thought or resolve, marching merely through force of habit, and falling to the ground with fatigue the moment they halted. In particular, one saw many enlisted men, peaceful citizens, men who had lived quietly on their income, stooping under the weight of their rifles; and little active volunteers, easily frightened but full of enthusiasm, as eager to attack as they were ready to run away; and among these, a sprinkling of soldiers in red breeches, the pitiful remnant of a division cut down in a great battle; somber artillerymen side by side with nondescript foot-soldiers; and here and there the bright helmet of a heavy-footed dragoon who had difficulty in keeping up with the quicker pace of the soldiers of the line.

Legions of irregulars with high-sounding names —"Avengers of Defeat," "Citizens of the Tomb," "Brethren in Death"—passed in their turn, looking like banditti.

Their leaders, former drapers or grain merchants, or tallow or soap chandlers—soldiers by force of circumstance, officers by reason of their moustaches or their money—loaded with weapons, flannel and braid and lace, spoke impressively, discussed plans of campaign, and behaved as if they alone bore the fortunes of dying France on their braggart shoulders; though, in truth, they frequently were afraid of their own men—scoundrels often brave without limit, but dishonest and debauched.

Rumor said that the Prussians were about to enter Rouen.

The members of the National Guard, who for two months had been reconnoitering with the utmost caution in the neighboring woods, occasionally shooting their own sentinels, and making ready for fight whenever a rabbit rustled in the undergrowth, had now returned to their homes. Their arms, their uniforms, all the death-dealing paraphernalia with which they had terrified all the milestones along the highroad for eight miles round, had suddenly and marvelously disappeared.

The last of the French soldiers had just crossed the Seine on their way to Pont-Audemer, through Saint-Sever and Bourg-Archard, and in their rear

the vanquished general, powerless to do anything with the forlorn remnants of his army, himself dismayed at the final overthrow of a nation accustomed to victory, and disastrously defeated despite its legendary bravery, walked between two orderlies.

Then a profound calm, a shuddering silent dread, settled on the city. Many a round-bellied citizen, emasculated by years devoted to business, anxiously awaited the conquerors, trembling lest his roasting-jacks or kitchen knives should be looked upon as weapons.

Life seemed to have stopped short; the shops were shut, the streets deserted. Now and then an inhabitant, awed by the silence, glided swiftly by in the shadow of the walls. The agony of suspense made men even desire the arrival of the enemy.

In the afternoon of the day following the departure of the French troops, a number of uhlans, coming no one knew whence, passed rapidly through the town. A little later, a black mass descended St. Catherine's Hill, while two other invading bodies appeared respectively on the Darnetal and the Bois-guillaume roads. The advance guards of the three corps arrived at precisely the same moment at the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, and the German army poured through all the adjacent streets, its battalions making the pavement ring with their firm, measured tread.

Orders shouted in an unknown guttural tongue rose to the windows of the seemingly dead, de-

serted houses; while behind the tightly-closed shutters eager eyes peered forth at the victors—masters now of the city, its fortunes, and its lives, by "right of war." The inhabitants, in their darkened rooms, were possessed by that terror which follows in the wake of cataclysms, of deadly upheavals of the earth, against which all human skill and strength are vain. For the same thing happens whenever the established order of things is disturbed, when security no longer exists, when all those rights usually protected by the laws of man or of Nature are at the mercy of unreasoning, savage force. The earthquake crushing a whole people under falling roofs; the floor let loose, and engulfing in its swirling depths the corpses of drowned peasants along with dead oxen and beams torn from shattered houses; or the army, covered with glory, murdering those who defend themselves, making prisoners of the rest, pillaging in the name of the Sword, and giving thanks to God to the thunder of cannon—all these are appalling scourges, which destroy all belief in eternal justice, all that confidence we have been taught to feel in the protection of Heaven and the reason of man.

Small detachments of soldiers knocked at each door, and then entered the houses; for the vanquished saw they must be civil to their conquerors.

After a short time, when the first terror had subsided, calm was again restored. In many houses the Prussian officer ate at the same table with the

family. He was often well-bred, and, out of courtesy, expressed sympathy with France and repugnance at being compelled to take part in the war. This sentiment was received with gratitude; besides, his protection might be necessary some day. By the exercise of tact the number of men quartered in one's house might be reduced; and why should one provoke the hostility of a person on whom one's whole welfare depended? Such conduct would look less like bravery than like foolhardiness. And foolhardiness is no longer a failing of the citizens of Rouen, as it was in the days when their city earned renown by its heroic defenses. Last of all—final argument based on the national politeness—the citizens of Rouen said to one another that it was only right to be civil in one's own house, provided there was no public exhibition of familiarity with the foreigner. Out of doors, therefore, citizen and soldier did not know each other; but in the house both chatted freely, and every evening the German remained a little longer warming himself at the hospitable hearth.

By degrees even the town itself resumed its ordinary aspect. The French seldom walked abroad, but the streets swarmed with Prussian soldiers. Moreover, the officers of the Blue Hussars, who arrogantly dragged their instruments of death along the pavements, seemed to hold the simple townsmen in but little more contempt than did the French cavalry officers who had drunk at the same cafés the year before.

But there was something in the air, a something strange and subtle, an intolerable foreign atmosphere like a penetrating odor—the odor of invasion. It permeated dwellings and places of public resort, changed the taste of food, made one imagine oneself in far-distant lands, amid dangerous barbaric tribes.

The conquerors demanded money, a great deal of money. The inhabitants paid what was asked; they were rich. But the wealthier a Norman tribesman becomes the more he suffers at having to part with anything that belongs to him, or to see any portion of his substance pass into the hands of another.

Nevertheless, within six or seven miles of the town, along the course of the river as it flows onward to Croisset, Dieppedalle, and Biessart, boatmen and fishermen often hauled to the surface of the water the body of a German, bloated in his uniform, killed by a blow from knife or club, his head crushed by a stone, or perhaps he had been pushed from some bridge into the stream below. The mud of the river-bed swallowed up these obscure acts of vengeance—savage, yet legitimate; these unrecorded deeds of bravery; these silent attacks fraught with greater danger than battles fought in broad day, and surrounded with no halo of romance. For hatred of the foreigner always arms some intrepid souls, ready to die for an idea.

At last as the invaders, though subjecting the

town to the strictest discipline, had not committed any of the deeds of horror with which they had been credited while on their triumphal march, the people grew bolder, and the necessities of business again animated the breasts of the local merchants. Some of these had important commercial interests at Havre—occupied at present by the French army—and wished to attempt to reach that port by overland route to Dieppe, taking the boat from that point.

Through the influence of the German officers whose acquaintance they had made, they obtained permission to leave town from the general in command.

A large four-horse coach having, therefore, been engaged for the journey, and ten passengers having registered their names with the proprietor, they decided to set out on a certain Tuesday morning before daybreak, to avoid attracting a crowd.

The ground had been frozen hard for some time and about three o'clock on Monday afternoon large black clouds from the north shed their burden of snow uninterruptedly all through that evening and night.

At half-past four in the morning the travelers met in the courtyard of the Hôtel de Normandie, where they were to take their seats in the coach.

They were still half asleep, and shivering with cold under their wraps. They could see one another only indistinctly in the darkness, and the mountain

of heavy winter wraps in which each was swathed made them look like a gathering of fat priests in their long cassocks. But two men recognized each other, a third accosted them, and the three began to talk. "I am taking my wife," said one. "So am I." "And I." The first speaker added: "We shall not return to Rouen, and if the Prussians approach Havre we shall go over to England." It turned out that all had made the same plans, being of similar disposition and temperament.

Still the horses were not harnessed. A small lantern carried by a stable-boy emerged now and then from one dark doorway to disappear immediately in another. The stamping of horses' hoofs, deadened by the dung and straw of the stable, was heard from time to time, and from inside the building issued a man's voice, talking to the animals and cursing them. A faint tinkle of bells showed that the harness was being put on; this tinkle soon developed into a continuous jingling, louder or softer according to the movements of the horse, sometimes stopping altogether, then breaking out in a sudden peal, accompanied by a pawing of the ground by an iron-shod hoof.

The door suddenly closed. All noise ceased. The half-frozen townsmen were silent; they remained motionless, stiff with cold.

A thick veil of glistening white flakes fell ceaselessly to the ground; it obliterated all outlines, enveloped all objects in an icy mantle of foam;

nothing was to be heard throughout the length and breadth of the silent, winter-bound city save the soft, nameless rustle of falling snow—a sensation rather than a sound—the gentle mingling of light atoms which seemed to fill all space, to cover the whole world.

The man reappeared with his lantern, leading by a rope a melancholy-looking horse, evidently led out against his will. The hostler placed him beside the pole, fastened the traces, and spent some time in walking round him to make sure that the harness was all right; for he could use only one hand, the other holding the lantern. As he was about to bring out the second horse he noticed the motionless group of travelers, already white with snow, and said to them: "Why don't you get inside the coach? You would be under cover, at least."

This did not seem to have occurred to them, and they at once took his advice. The three men seated their wives at the far end of the coach, then got in themselves; lastly the other vague, snow-shrouded forms mounted to the remaining places without a word.

The floor was covered with straw, into which the feet sank. The ladies at the far end, having brought with them little copper foot-warmers heated by means of a kind of chemical fuel, proceeded to light these, and spent some time in talking in low tones on their advantages, saying over and over again things they had all known for a long time.

At last, six horses instead of four having been harnessed to the diligence, because of the heavy roads, a voice outside asked: "Is everyone there?" To which a voice from the interior replied: "Yes," and they set out.

The vehicle moved slowly, slowly, at snail's pace; the wheels sank into the snow; the entire body of the coach creaked and groaned; the horses slipped, panted, steamed, and the coachman's long whip cracked incessantly, flying here and there, coiling up, then flinging out its length like a slender serpent, as it lashed some rounded flank, which instantly grew tense as it strained in further effort.

Light came on. Those light flakes which one traveler, a native of Rouen, had compared to a rain of cotton, fell no longer. A dull light filtered through dark, heavy clouds, which made the country more dazzlingly white by contrast, a whiteness broken sometimes by a row of tall trees spangled with hoarfrost, or by a cottage roof hooded in snow.

Within the coach the passengers eyed one another curiously in the dim light of dawn.

At the back, in the best seats, Monsieur and Madame Loiseau, wholesale wine merchants of the Rue Grand-Pont, slept opposite each other. Formerly clerk to a merchant who had failed in business, Loiseau had bought his master's interest, and made a fortune for himself. He sold very bad wine at a very low price to the retail dealers in

the country, and had the reputation, among his friends and acquaintances, of being a cunning rogue, a true Norman, full of tricks and wiles. So well established was his character as a cheat that, in the mouths of the citizens of Rouen, the very name of Loiseau became a byword for trickery.

Besides this, Loiseau was noted for his practical jokes of every description, good or ill-natured; and no one could mention his name without adding at once: "He's an extraordinary man—Loiseau." He was undersized and pot-bellied, and had a florid face with a grayish beard.

His wife—tall, strong, determined, with a loud voice and decided manner—represented the spirit of order and arithmetic in the business house which Loiseau enlivened by his jovial activity.

Beside them, dignified in bearing, belonging to a superior caste, sat Monsieur Carré-Lamadon, a man of considerable importance, a king in the cotton trade, proprietor of three spinning-mills, officer of the Legion of Honor, and member of the General Council. During the whole time the Empire was in the ascendency he remained the chief of the well-disposed Opposition, merely in order to command a higher value for his devotion when he should rally to the cause which he meanwhile opposed with "courteous weapons," to use his own expression.

Madame Carré-Lamadon, much younger than her husband, was the consolation of all the officers of

good family quartered at Rouen. Pretty, slender, graceful, she sat opposite her husband, nestling in her furs, and gazing mournfully at the forlorn interior of the coach.

Her neighbors, the Comte and Comtesse Hubert de Bréville, bore one of the noblest and most ancient names in Normandy. The Count, a nobleman advanced in years and of aristocratic bearing, strove to enhance, by every artifice of the toilet. his natural resemblance to King Henry IV, who, according to a legend of which the family were inordinately proud, had been the favored lover of a De Bréville lady, and father of her child—the frail one's husband, in recognition of this fact, having been made a count and governor of a province.

A colleague of Monsieur Carré-Lamadon in the General Council, Count Hubert represented the Orleanist party in his department. The story of his marriage with the daughter of a small shipowner at Nantes had always remained something of a mystery. But as the Countess had an air of unmistakable good breeding, entertained faultlessly, and was even supposed to have been loved by a son of Louis-Philippe, the nobility vied with one another in doing her honor, and her drawing-room remained the choicest in the whole countryside—the only one that retained the old spirit of gallantry, and to which access was not easy.

It was said the fortune of the Brévilles, all in real estate, amounted to five hundred thousand francs a year.

These six persons occupied the farther end of the coach, and represented Society—with an income—the strong, established society of good people with religion and principle, with whom life passed happily and easily.

It happened by chance that all the women were seated on the same side; and the Countess had also for neighbors two nuns, who spent the time in fingering their long rosaries and murmuring paternosters and aves. One of them was old, and so deeply pitted with smallpox that she looked as if she had received a charge of bird-shot full in the face. The other, of sickly appearance, had a pretty but wasted countenance, and a narrow, consumptive chest; she was sapped by that devouring faith which is the making of martyrs and visionaries.

Sitting opposite the two nuns were a man and a woman, who attracted all eyes. The man—a well-known character—was Cornudet, the democrat, the terror of all respectable persons. For twenty years his big red beard had been on terms of intimate acquaintance with the tankards of all the republican cafés. With the help of his comrades and brethren he had dissipated a respectable fortune left him by his father, a long-established confectioner, and he now impatiently awaited the Republic, that he might at last be rewarded with the office he had earned by his revolutionary orgies. On the fourth of September—possibly as the re-

sult of a practical joke—he was led to believe that he had been appointed prefect; but when he attempted to take up the duties of the office the clerks in charge refused to recognize his authority, and he was compelled in consequence to retire. A good sort of fellow in other respects, inoffensive and obliging, he had thrown himself zealously into the work of making an organized defense of the town. He had had pits dug in the level country, young forest trees felled, and traps set on all the roads; then at the approach of the enemy, thoroughly satisfied with his preparations, he had hastily returned to the town. He thought he might now do more good at Havre, where new intrenchments would soon be necessary.

The woman, who belonged to the courtesan class, was celebrated for stoutness of figure unusual for her age, which had obtained for her the nickname of "Boule de Suif" (Ball-of-Suet). Short and round, fat as a pig, with puffy fingers constricted at the joints, looking like rows of short sausages; with a shining, tight-stretched skin and an enormous bust filling out her bodice, she was nevertheless attractive and was much sought after, owing to her fresh and pleasing appearance. Her face was like a crimson apple, a peony-bud just bursting into bloom; she had magnificent dark eyes, fringed with thick, heavy lashes, which cast a shadow into their depths; her mouth was small, ripe, kissable, and was furnished with the tiniest of white teeth.

As soon as she was recognized the respectable matrons of the party began to whisper among themselves, and the words "hussy" and "public scandal" were spoken so loudly that Boule de Suif raised her head. She cast such a challenging, bold look at her neighbors that sudden silence fell on the company, and all lowered their eyes, with the exception of Loiseau, who watched her with evident interest.

Conversation was soon resumed among the three ladies, whom the presence of this girl had suddenly drawn together in the bonds of friendship —one might almost say in those of intimacy. They decided that they ought to combine, as it were, in their dignity as wives in face of this shameless hussy; for legitimized love always despises its easy-going brother.

The three men, also, brought together by a certain conservative instinct awakened by the presence of Cornudet, spoke of money matters in a tone expressive of contempt for the poor. Count Hubert related the losses he had sustained at the hands of the Prussians, spoke of the cattle that had been stolen from him, of crops that had been ruined, with the easy manner of a nobleman who was also a tenfold millionaire, and whom such reverses would hardly inconvenience for a single year. Monsieur Carré-Lamadon, a man of wide experience in the cotton industry, had taken care to send six hundred thousand francs to England as pro-

vision against the rainy day he was always anticipating. As for Loiseau, he had managed to sell to the French commissariat department all the wines he had in stock, so that the State now owed him a considerable sum, which he hoped to receive at Havre.

The three men eyed one another in friendly, well-disposed fashion. Although of varying social status, they were united in the brotherhood of money—in that vast freemasonry made up of those who possess, who can jingle gold whenever they choose to put their hands into their breeches' pockets.

The coach went so slowly that at ten o'clock in the morning it had not covered twelve miles. Three times the men of the party got out and climbed the hills on foot. The passengers were becoming uneasy, for they had counted on lunching at Tôtes, and it appeared now as if they would hardly arrive there before nightfall. Every one was eagerly looking out for an inn by the roadside, when suddenly the coach stuck fast in a snowdrift, and it took two hours to extricate it.

As appetites increased, their spirits fell; no inn, no wine-shop could be discovered, the approach of the Prussians and the transit of the starving French troops having frightened away all business for some time.

The men asked for food in the farmhouses beside the road, but could not find so much as a crust of bread; for the suspicious peasant invariably hid his

stores for fear of being robbed by the soldiers, who, being entirely without food, would take violent possession of everything they found.

About one o'clock Loiseau announced that he positively had a great hollow in his stomach. They had all been suffering in the same way for some time, and the increasing pangs of hunger had put an end to all conversation.

Now and then some one yawned, another followed his example, and each in turn, according to his character, breeding, and social station, yawned either quietly or noisily, placing his hand before the gaping void whence issued breath condensed into vapor.

Several times Boule de Suif bent over, as if searching for something under her skirts. She would hesitate a moment, look at her neighbors, and then quietly sit upright again. All faces were pale and drawn. Loiseau declared he would give a thousand francs for a knuckle of ham. His wife made an involuntary and quickly checked gesture of protest. It always hurt her to hear of money being squandered, and she could not even understand jokes on such a subject.

"Really, I don't feel at all well," said the Count. "Why did I not think of bringing some food?" Each one reproached himself in similar terms.

Cornudet, however, had a bottle of rum, which he offered to his neighbors. They all coldly refused except Loiseau, who took a sip, and returned the

bottle with thanks, saying: "That's good; it warms one up, and cheats the appetite." The alcohol put him in good humor, and he proposed they should do as the sailors did in the song: eat the fattest of the passengers. This indirect allusion to Boule de Suif shocked the respectable members of the party. No one replied; only Cornudet smiled. The two good sisters had ceased to mumble their rosary, and, with hands enfolded in their wide sleeves, sat motionless, their eyes steadfastly cast down, doubtless offering up as a sacrifice to Heaven the suffering it had sent them.

At last, at three o'clock, as they were in the midst of an apparently boundless plain, with not a single village in sight, Boule de Suif stooped quickly, and drew from under the seat a large basket covered with a white napkin.

From this she extracted first a small earthenware plate and a silver drinking-cup, then an enormous dish containing two whole chickens cut into joints and imbedded in jelly. The basket contained other good things: pies, fruit, dainties of all sorts —provisions, in short, for a three days' journey, rendering their owner independent of wayside inns. The necks of four bottles protruded from the midst of the food. She took a chicken wing, and began to eat it daintily, with one of those rolls called in Normandy "régence."

All eyes were directed toward her. An odor of food filled the air, causing nostrils to dilate,

mouths to water, and jaws to contract painfully. The scorn of the ladies for this disreputable female grew positively ferocious; they would have liked to kill her, or throw her and her drinking-cup, her basket, and her provisions, out of the coach into the snowy road.

But Loiseau's gaze was fixed greedily on the chickens.

"Well, well, this lady had more forethought than the rest of us," he said. "Some people think of everything."

Boule de Suif looked up at him.

"Would you like some, Monsieur? It is hard to go on fasting all day."

He bowed.

"Upon my soul, I can't refuse; I cannot hold out another minute. All is fair in war time, is it not, Madame?" And, casting a glance on those around, he added: "At times like this it is very pleasant to meet with obliging persons."

He spread a newspaper over his knees to avoid soiling his trousers, and, with a pocket-knife he always carried, helped himself to a chicken-leg, covered with jelly, which he thereupon proceeded to devour.

Then Boule de Suif, in low, humble tones, invited the nuns to partake of her repast. Both accepted the offer unhesitatingly, and after a few stammered words of thanks began to eat quickly, without looking up. Neither did Cornudet refuse his

neighbor's offer, and, in combination with the nuns, a sort of table was formed by opening out the newspaper over the four pairs of knees.

Mouths kept opening and shutting, ferociously masticating and devouring the food. Loiseau, in his corner, was very busy, and in low tones urged his wife to follow his example. She held out for a long time, but overstrained nature gave way at last. Her husband, assuming his politest manner, asked their "charming companion" if he might be allowed to offer Madame Loiseau a small helping.

"Certainly, Monsieur," she replied, with an amiable smile, holding out the dish.

When the first bottle of claret was opened some embarrassment was caused by the fact that there was only one drinking-cup, but this was passed from one to another, after being wiped. Cornudet alone, doubtless in a spirit of gallantry, raised to his own lips that part of the rim which was still moist from those of his fair neighbor.

Then, surrounded by people who were eating, and almost suffocated by the odor of food, the Comte and Comtesse de Bréville and Monsieur and Madame Carré-Lamadon endured that hateful form of torture which has perpetuated the name of Tantalus. All at once the manufacturer's young wife heaved a sigh which made every one turn and look at her; she was as white as the snow without; her eyes closed, her head fell forward; she had fainted. Her husband, beside himself, implored the help of

his neighbors. No one seemed to know what to do until the elder of the two nuns, raising the patient's head, held Boule de Suif's drinking-cup to her lips, and made her swallow a few drops of wine, The pretty invalid moved, opened her eyes, smiled, and declared in a feeble voice that she was herself again. But, to prevent a recurrence of the catastrophe, the nun made her drink a cupful of claret, adding: "It's only hunger—that's what is wrong with you."

Then Boule de Suif, blushing and embarrassed, stammered, looking at the four passengers who were still fasting:

"*Mon Dieu,* if I might offer these ladies and gentlemen——"

She stopped short, fearing a snub. But Loiseau continued:

"Hang it all, in such a case as this we are all brothers and sisters and ought to assist each other. Come, come, ladies, don't stand on ceremony, for goodness' sake! Do we even know whether we shall find a house in which to pass the night? At our present rate we shan't be at Tôtes till midday to-morrow."

They hesitated, no one daring to be the first to accept. But the Count settled the question. He turned toward the abashed girl, and in his most distinguished manner said:

"We accept gratefully, Madame."

As usual, it was only the first step that cost. The

Rubicon once crossed, they set to work with a will. The basket was emptied. It still contained a *pâté de foie gras,* a lark pie, a piece of smoked tongue, Crassane pears, Pont-Lèvèque gingerbread, fancy cakes, and a cup full of pickled gherkins and onions —Boul de Suif, like all women, being very fond of indigestible things.

Of course, they could not eat this girl's food without speaking to her. So they began to talk, stiffly at first; then, as she seemed by no means forward, with greater freedom. Mesdames de Bréville and Carré-Lamadon, who were accomplished women of the world, were gracious and tactful. The Countess especially displayed that amiable condescension characteristic of great ladies whom no contact with baser mortals can sully, and was absolutely charming. But the sturdy Madame Loiseau, who had the soul of a gendarme, continued morose, speaking little and eating much.

Conversation naturally turned on the war. Terrible stories were told about the Prussians, deeds of bravery were recounted of the French; and all these people who were fleeing themselves were ready to pay homage to the courage of their compatriots. Personal experiences soon followed, and Boule de Suif related with genuine emotion, and with that warmth of language not uncommon in women of her class and temperament, how it happened that she had left Rouen.

"I thought at first that I should be able to stay,"

she said. "My house was well stocked with provisions, and it seemed better to put up with feeding a few soldiers than to banish myself heaven knows where. But when I saw these Prussians it was too much for me! My blood boiled with rage; I wept the whole day for very shame. Oh, if only I had been a man! I looked at them from my window—the fat pigs, with their pointed helmets!—and my maid held my hands to keep me from throwing my furniture down on them. Then some of them were quartered in my house; I flew at the throat of the first one who entered. They are as easy to strangle as other men! I should have been the death of that one if I hadn't been dragged away from him by my hair. I had to hide after that. As soon as I could find an opportunity I left the place, and here I am."

They warmly congratulated her. She rose in the estimation of her companions, who had not been so brave; and Corudet listened to her with the approving and benevolent smile of an apostle, the smile a priest might wear in listening to a disciple praising God; for long-bearded democrats of his type have a monopoly of patriotism, as priests have a monopoly of religion. He held forth in turn, with dogmatic self-assurance, in the style of the proclamations daily pasted on the walls of the town, winding up with a specimen of stump oratory in which he reviled "that besotted fool of a Louis Napoleon."

But Boule de Suif was indignant, for she was an ardent Bonapartist. She turned as red as a cherry, and stammered in her anger: "I'd like to have seen you in his place—you and your kind. There would have been some sense in that. It was you who betrayed that man. It would be impossible to live in France if we were governed by such rascals as you!"

Cornudet, unmoved by this tirade, still smiled a superior, contemptuous smile; and one felt that high words were impending, when the Count interposed, and, not without difficulty, succeeded in calming the exasperated woman, saying that all sincere opinions should be respected. But the Countess and the manufacturer's wife, imbued with the unreasoning hatred of the upper classes for the Republic, and instinct, moreover, with the affection felt by all women for the pomp and circumstance of despotic government, were drawn, in spite of themselves towards this dignified young woman, whose opinions coincided so closely with their own.

The basket was empty. The ten persons had finished its contents without difficulty amid general regret that it did not hold more. Conversation went on a little longer, though it flagged somewhat after the passengers had finished eating.

Night fell, the darkness grew more intense, and the cold made Boule de Suif shiver, in spite of her plumpness. So Madame de Bréville offered

her her foot-warmer, the fuel of which had been several times renewed since the morning, and she accepted the offer at once, for her feet were icy cold. Mesdames Carré-Lamadon and Loiseau gave theirs to the nuns.

The driver lighted his lanterns. They cast a bright gleam on a cloud of vapor which hovered over the sweating flanks of the horses and on the roadside snow, which seemed to unroll as they went along in the changing light of the lamps.

All was now indistinguishable in the coach; but suddenly a movement occurred in the corner occupied by Boule de Suif and Cornudet; and Loiseau, peering into the gloom, fancied he saw the big, bearded democrat move hastily to one side, as if he had received a well-directed, though noiseless, blow in the darkness.

Tiny lights glimmered ahead. It was Tôtes. The coach had been on the road eleven hours, which, with the three hours allotted the horses in four periods for feeding and breathing, made fourteen. It entered the town, and stopped before the Hôtel du Commerce.

The coach door opened; a well-known noise made all the travelers start; it was the clanging of a scabbard on the pavement; then a voice called out something in German.

Although the coach had come to a standstill, no one got out; it looked as if they were afraid of being murdered the moment they left their seats.

Thereupon the driver appeared, holding in his hand one of his lanterns, which cast a sudden glow on the interior of the coach, lighting up the double row of startled faces, mouths wide open.

Beside the driver stood in the full light a German officer, a tall young man, fair and slender, tightly encased in his uniform like a woman in her corset, his flat cap, tilted to one side of his head, making him look like an English hotel runner. His exaggerated moustache, long and straight and tapering to a point at both ends in a single blond hair that could hardly be seen, seemed to weigh down the corners of his mouth and give a droop to his lips.

In Alsatian French he requested the travelers to alight, saying stiffly:

"Please get out, ladies and gentlemen."

The two nuns were the first to obey, manifesting the docility of holy women accustomed to submission on every occasion. Next appeared the Count and Countess, followed by the manufacturer and his wife, after whom came Loiseau, pushing his larger and better half before him.

"Good-evening, Monsieur," he said to the officer as he put his foot to the ground, acting on an impulse born of prudence rather than of politeness. The other, insolent like all in authority, only stared without replying.

Boule de Suif and Cornudet, though near the door, were the last to alight, grave and dignified before the enemy. The stout girl tried to control

herself and appear calm; the democrat stroked his long sandy beard with a somewhat shaky hand. Both tried to maintain their dignity, knowing well that at such a time each individual is always looked upon as more or less typical of his nation; and, also, resenting the complaisant attitude of their companions, Boule de Suif tried to wear a bolder front than her neighbors, the virtuous women, while he, feeling that it was incumbent on him to set a good example, kept up the attitude of resistance which he had first assumed when he undertook to mine the highroads round Rouen.

They entered the spacious kitchen of the inn, and the German, having demanded the passports signed by the general in command, in which were mentioned the name, description, and profession of each traveler, inspected them all minutely, comparing their appearance with the written particulars.

Then he said brusquely: "Very well," and turned away.

They breathed freely. They were still hungry; so supper was ordered. Half an hour was required for its preparation, and while two servants were apparently engaged in getting it ready the travelers went to look at their rooms. These opened off a long corridor, at the end of which was a glazed door with a number on it.

They were about to take their seats at table when the innkeeper appeared in person. He was a former horse-dealer, a large, asthmatic person, al-

ways wheezing, coughing, and clearing his throat. Follenvie was his name.

"Mademoiselle Elizabeth Rousset?" he said.

Boul de Suif started, and turned around.

"That is my name."

"Mademoiselle, the Prussian officer wishes to speak to you immediately."

"To me?"

"Yes; if you are Mademoiselle Rousset."

She hesitated, reflected a moment, and then declared roundly:

"That may be; but I'm not going."

Her companions moved restlessly around her; everyone wondered and speculated as to the cause of this order. The Count approached:

"You are wrong, Madame, for your refusal may bring trouble not only on yourself, but also on all your companions. It is never wise to resist those in authority. Your compliance with this request cannot possibly be fraught with any danger; it has probably been made because some formality or other was forgotten."

All added their voices to that of the Count; Boule de Suif was begged, urged, lectured, and at last convinced; everyone was afraid of the complications that might result from headstrong action on her part. She said finally:

"I am doing it for your sakes, remember that!"

The Countess took her hand. "And we are grateful to you."

She left the room. All waited for her return before beginning to eat. Each was distressed that he or she had not been sent for rather than this impulsive, quick-tempered girl, and each mentally rehearsed platitudes in case of being summoned also.

But at the end of ten minutes she reappeared, breathing hard, crimson with indignation.

"Oh! the scoundrel! the scoundrel!" she stammered.

All were anxious to know what had happened; but she declined to enlighten them, and when the Count pressed the point she silenced him with much dignity, saying:

"No; the matter has nothing to do with you, and I cannot speak of it."

Then they took their places round a high soup tureen, from which issued an odor of cabbage. In spite of this strange incident, the supper was cheerful. The cider was good; the Loiseaus and the nuns drank it from motives of economy. The others ordered wine; Cornudet demanded beer. He had his own fashion of uncorking the bottle and making the beer foam, gazing at it as he inclined his glass and then raised it to a position between the lamp and his eye that he might judge of its color. When he drank, his great beard, which matched the color of his favorite beverage, seemed to tremble with affection; his eyes positively squinted in the endeavor not to lose sight of the beloved glass, and

he looked for all the world as if he were fulfilling the only function for which he was born. He seemed to have established in his mind an affinity between the two great passions of his life—pale ale and revolution—and assuredly he could not taste the one without dreaming of the other.

Monsieur and Madame Follenvie dined at the end of the table. The man, wheezing like a broken-down locomotive, was too short-winded to talk when he was eating. But his wife was not silent a moment; she told how the Prussians had impressed her on their arrival, what they did, what they said; execrating them in the first place because they cost her money, and in the second because she had two sons in the army. She addressed herself principally to the Countess, flattered at the opportunity of talking to a lady of quality.

Then she lowered her voice, and began to broach delicate subjects. Her husband interrupted her.

"You would do well to hold your tongue, Madame Follenvie."

But she took no notice of him, and went on:

"Yes, Madame, these Germans do nothing but eat potatoes and pork, and then pork and potatoes. And don't imagine for a moment that they are clean! No, indeed! And if only you saw them drilling for hours, indeed for days, together; they all collect in a field, then they do nothing but march backward and forward, and wheel this way and that. If only they would cultivate the land, or

stay at home and work on their roads! Really, Madame, these soldiers are of no earthly use! Poor people have to feed and keep them, only in order that they may learn how to kill! True, I am only an old woman with no education, but when I see them wearing themselves out marching about from morning till night I say to myself: When there are people who make discoveries that are of use to people, why should others take so much trouble to do harm? Really, now, isn't it a terrible thing to kill people, whether they are Prussians, or English, or Poles, or French? If we revenge ourselves on any one who injures us we do wrong, and are punished for it; but when our sons are shot down like partridges that is all right, and decorations are given to the man who kills the most. No, indeed, I never shall be able to understand it."

Cornudet raised his voice:

"War is a barbarous proceeding when we attack a peaceful neighbor, but it is a sacred duty when undertaken in defense of one's country."

The old woman looked down.

"Yes; it's another matter when one acts in self-defense; but would it not be better to kill all the kings, seeing that they make war only to amuse themselves?"

Cornudet's eyes kindled.

"Bravo, citizens!" he said.

Monsieur Carré-Lamadon was reflecting profoundly. Although an ardent admirer of great gen-

erals the peasant woman's sturdy common-sense made him reflect on the wealth that might accrue to a country by the employment of so many idle hands now maintained at a great expense, of so much unproductive force, if they were employed in those great industrial enterprises which it will take centuries to complete.

But Loiseau, leaving his seat, went over to the innkeeper and began chatting in a low voice. The big man chuckled, coughed, sputtered; his enormous body shook with merriment at the jokes of the other; and he ended by buying six casks of claret from Loiseau to be delivered in spring, after the departure of the Prussians.

The moment supper was over every one went to bed, exhausted.

But Loiseau, who had been making quiet observations, sent his wife to bed, and amused himself by placing first his ear, then his eye, to the bedroom keyhole, in order to discover what he called "the mysteries of the corridor."

At the end of about an hour he heard a rustling, peeped out quickly, and caught sight of Boule de Suif, looking rounder and fatter than ever in a dressing-gown of blue cashmere trimmed with white lace. She held a candle in her hand and directed her steps to the numbered door at the end of the corridor. But one of the side doors was partly open, and when, after a few minutes, she returned, Cornudet, in his shirt sleeves, followed her. They

spoke in low tones, then stopped short. Boule de Suif seemed to be firmly denying him admission to her room. Unfortunately, Loiseau could not at first hear what they said; but toward the end of the conversation they raised their voices, and he caught a few words. Cornudet was loudly insistent.

"How silly you are! What does it matter to you?" he said.

She seemed indignant, and replied:

"No, my good man, there are times when one does not do that sort of thing; besides, in this place it would be shameful."

Apparently he did not understand, and asked the reason. Then she lost her temper and her caution, and, speaking still louder, said:

"Why? Can't you understand why? When there are Prussians in the house! Perhaps even in the very next room!"

He was silent. The patriotic shame of this wanton, who would not allow herself to be caressed in the neighborhood of the enemy, must have roused his dormant dignity, for after bestowing on her a simple kiss he crept quietly back to his room. Loiseau, much edified, capered around the bedroom before taking his place beside his sleeping spouse.

Then silence reigned throughout the house. But presently from some remote part—it might easily have been either cellar or attic—arose a stertorous, monotonous, regular snoring, a dull, prolonged rumbling, varied by tremors like those of a boiler under

pressure of steam. Monsieur Follenvie had gone to sleep, and was announcing that fact in his usual manner.

As they had decided on setting out at eight o'clock the next morning, everyone was in the kitchen at that hour; but the coach, its roof covered with snow, stood by itself in the middle of the yard, without either horses or driver. They sought the latter in the stables, coach-houses, and barns—but in vain. So the men of the party resolved to search everywhere for him, and sallied forth. They found themselves in the square, with the church at the farther side, and to right and left low-roofed houses where there were some Prussian soldiers. The first soldier they saw was peeling potatoes. The second was washing out a barber's shop. Another, bearded to the eyes, was fondling a crying baby, and dandling it on his knees to quiet it; and the stout peasant women, whose men-folk were for the most part at the war, were, by means of signs, telling their obedient conquerors what work they were to do: chop wood, prepare soup, grind coffee; one of them was doing the washing for his hostess, an infirm old grandmother.

The Count, astonished at what he saw, questioned the beadle, who was coming out of the presbytery. The old man answered:

"Oh, those men are not at all a bad sort; they are not Prussians, I am told; they come from somewhere farther off, I don't exactly know where.

And they have all left wives and children behind them; they are not fond of war either, you may be sure! I am sure they are mourning for the men where they came from, just as we do here; and the war causes them as much unhappiness as it causes us. As a matter of fact, things are not so very bad here just now, because the soldiers do no harm, and work as if they were in their own houses. You see, sir, poor folk always help one another; it is the great ones of this world who make war."

Cornudet, indignant at the friendly understanding established between conquerors and conquered, withdrew, preferring to shut himself up in the inn.

"They are repeopling the country," jested Loiseau.

"They are undoing the harm they have done," said Monsieur Carré-Lamadon gravely.

But they could not find the coach-driver. At last he was discovered in the village café, fraternizing cordially with the officer's orderly.

"Were you not told to harness the horses at eight o'clock?" demanded the Count.

"Oh, yes; but I've had different orders since."

"What orders?"

"Not to harness at all."

"Who gave you such orders?"

"Why, the Prussian officer."

"But why?"

"I don't know. Go and ask him. I am forbidden

to harness the horses, so I don't harness them—that's all."

"Did he tell you so himself?"

"No, sir; the innkeeper gave me the order from him."

"When?"

"Last night, just as I was going to bed."

The three men returned in a very uneasy frame of mind.

They asked for Monsieur Follenvie, but the servant replied that on account of his asthma he never got up before ten o'clock. They were strictly forbidden to rouse him earlier, except in case of fire.

They wished to see the officer, but that also was impossible, although he slept in the inn. Monsieur Follenvie alone was authorized to interview him on civil matters. So they waited. The women returned to their rooms, and occupied themselves with trivial matters.

Cornudet settled down beside the tall kitchen fireplace, before a blazing fire. He had a small table and a jug of beer placed beside him, and he smoked his pipe—a pipe which enjoyed among democrats a consideration almost equal to his own, as though it had served its country in serving Cornudet. It was a fine meerschaum, admirably colored to a black the shade of its owner's teeth, but sweet-smelling, gracefully curved, at home in its master's hand and completing his physiognomy. And Cornudet sat motionless, his eyes fixed now on the dancing flames,

now on the froth that crowned his beer; and after each draught he passed his long, thin fingers with an air of satisfaction through his long, greasy hair, as he sucked the foam from his moustache.

Loiseau, under pretense of stretching his legs, went out to see whether he could sell wine to the country dealers. The Count and the manufacturer began to talk politics. They forecast the future of France. One believed in the Orleans dynasty, the other in an unknown savior—a hero who should rise up in the last extremity: a Du Guesclin, perhaps a Joan of Arc? or another Napoleon the First? Ah! if only the Prince Imperial were not so young! Cornudet, listening to them, smiled like a man who holds the keys of destiny in his hands. His pipe perfumed the whole kitchen.

As the clock struck ten, Monsieur Follenvie appeared. He was immediately surrounded and questioned, but could only repeat, three or four times in succession, and without variation, the words:

"The officer said to me, like this: 'Monsieur Follenvie, you will forbid them to harness the horses for those travelers tomorrow. They are not to go without an order from me. You hear? That is sufficient.' "

Then they asked to see the officer. The Count sent him his card, on which Monsieur Carré-Lamadon also inscribed his name and titles. The Prussian sent word that the two men would be admitted to see him after his luncheon—about one o'clock.

The ladies reappeared, and they all ate a little, in spite of their anxiety. Boule de Suif appeared ill and very much worried.

They were finishing their coffee when the orderly came to fetch the gentlemen.

Loiseau joined the other two; but when they tried to get Cornudet to accompany them, by way of adding greater solemnity to the occasion, he declared proudly that he never would have anything to do with the Germans, and, resuming his seat in the chimney corner, he called for another jug of beer.

The three men went upstairs, and were ushered into the best room in the inn, where the officer received them lolling at his ease in an armchair, his feet on the mantelpiece, smoking a long porcelain pipe, and enveloped in a gorgeous dressing-gown, probably stolen from the deserted dwelling of some citizen destitute of taste in dress. He neither rose, greeted them, nor even glanced in their direction. He gave a fine example of that insolence of bearing which seems natural to the victorious soldier.

After the lapse of a few moments he said in his halting French:

"What do you want?"

"We wish to start on our journey," said the Count.

"No."

"May I ask the reason of your refusal?"

"Because I don't choose."

"I would respectfully call your attention, Monsieur, to the fact that your general in command gave us a permit to proceed to Dieppe; and I do not think we have done anything to deserve this harshness at your hands."

"I don't choose—that's all. You may go."

They bowed, and retired.

The afternoon was wretched. They could not understand the caprice of this German, and the strangest ideas came into their heads. They all congregated in the kitchen, and talked over the subject, imagining all kinds of unlikely things. Perhaps they were to be kept as hostages—but for what reason? or to be extradited as prisoners of war? or possibly they were to be held for ransom? They were panic-stricken at this last supposition. The richest among them were the most alarmed, seeing themselves forced to empty bags of gold into the insolent soldier's hands in order to purchase their lives. They racked their brains for plausible lies whereby they might conceal the fact that they were rich, and pass themselves off as poor—very poor. Loiseau took off his watch-chain, and put it in his pocket. The approach of night increased their apprehensions. The lamp was lighted, and as it lacked yet two hours before dinner Madame Loiseau proposed a game of *trente-et-un*. It would distract their thoughts. The rest agreed, and Cornudet himself joined the party, first putting out his pipe.

The Count shuffled the cards—dealt—and Boule de Suif had thirty-one to begin with; soon the interest of the game assuaged the anxiety of the players. But Cornudet noticed that Loiseau and his wife were in league to cheat.

They were about to sit down to dinner when Monsieur Follenvie appeared, and in his grating voice announced:

"The Prussian officer sends to ask Mademoiselle Elizabeth Rousset whether she has changed her mind yet."

Boule de Suif stood still, pale as death. Then, suddenly turning scarlet with anger, she gasped:

"Please tell that scoundrel, that cur, that carrion of a Prussian, that I never will consent—you understand?—never, never, never!"

The fat innkeeper left the room. Then Boule de Suif was surrounded, questioned, entreated on all sides to reveal the mystery of her visit to the officer. She refused at first; but her wrath soon got the better of her.

"What does he want? He wants to make me his mistress!" she cried.

No one was shocked at the word, so great was the general indignation. Cornudet broke his jug as he banged it down on the table. A loud outcry arose against this base soldier. All were furious. They drew together in common resistance against the foe, as if some part of the sacrifice exacted of Boule de Suif had been demanded of each. The Count de-

clared, with supreme disgust, that these people behaved like ancient barbarians. The women, above all, manifested a lively and tender sympathy for Boule de Suif. The nuns, who appeared only at meals, cast down their eyes, and said nothing.

They dined, however, as soon as the first indignant outburst had subsided; but they spoke little, and thought much.

The ladies went to bed early; and the men, having lighted their pipes, proposed a game of écarté, in which Monsieur Follenvie was invited to join, the travelers hoping to question him skilfully as to the best means of vanquishing the officer's obduracy. But he thought of nothing but his cards, would listen to nothing, reply to nothing, and repeated, time after time: "Attend to the game, gentlemen! attend to the game!" So absorbed was his attention that he even forgot to expectorate. The consequence was that his chest gave forth rumbling sounds like those of an organ. His wheezing lungs struck every note of the asthmatic scale, from deep, hollow tones to a shrill, hoarse piping resembling that of a young cock trying to crow.

He refused to go to bed when his wife, overcome with sleep, came to fetch him. So she went off alone, for she was an early bird, always up with the sun; while he was addicted to late hours, ever ready to spend the night with friends. He merely said: "Put my eggnogg by the fire," and went on with the game. When the other men saw that

nothing was to be got out of him they declared it was time to retire, and each sought his bed.

They rose early the next morning, with a vague hope of being allowed to start, a greater desire than ever to do so, and a terror at having to spend another day in this wretched little inn.

Alas! the horses remained in the stable, the driver was invisible. They spent their time, for want of something better to do, in wandering round the coach.

Luncheon was a gloomy affair; and there was a general coolness toward Boule de Suif, for night, which brings counsel, had somewhat modified the judgment of her companions. In the cold light of the morning they almost bore a grudge against the girl for not having secretly sought out the Prussian, that the rest of the party might receive a joyful surprise when they awoke. What could be more simple? Besides, who would have been the wiser? She might have saved appearances by telling the officer that she had taken pity on their distress. Such a step would be of little consequence to her.

But no one as yet confessed to such thoughts.

In the afternoon, seeing that they were all bored to death, the Count proposed a walk in the neighborhood of the village. Each one wrapped himself up well, and the little party set out, leaving behind only Cornudet, who preferred to sit over the fire, and the two nuns, who were in the habit of spending their day in the church or at the presbytery.

The cold, which grew more intense each day, almost froze the noses and ears of the pedestrians, their feet began to ache so that each step was a penance, and when they reached the open country it looked so mournful and depressing in its limitless mantle of white that they all hastily retraced their steps, with bodies benumbed and heavy hearts.

The four women walked in front, and the three men followed a little in the rear.

Loiseau, who saw perfectly well how matters stood, asked suddenly whether that trollop were going to keep them waiting much longer in this God-forsaken spot. The Count, always courteous, replied that they could not exact so painful a sacrifice from any woman, and that the first move must come from herself. Monsieur Carré-Lamadon remarked that if the French, as they talked of doing, made a counter attack by way of Dieppe, their encounter with the enemy must inevitably take place at Tôtes. This reflection made the other two anxious.

"Supposing we escape on foot?" said Loiseau.

The Count shrugged his shoulders.

"How can you think of such a thing, in this snow? And with our wives? Besides, we should be pursued at once, overtaken in ten minutes, and brought back as prisoners at the mercy of the soldiery."

This was true enough; they were silent.

The ladies talked of dress, but a certain constraint

seemed to prevail among them, embarrassing everybody.

Suddenly, at the end of the street, the officer appeared. His tall, waspslike, uniformed figure was outlined against the snow which bounded the horizon, and he walked, knees apart, with that motion peculiar to soldiers, who are always careful not to soil their polished boots.

He bowed as he passed the ladies, then glanced scornfully at the men, who had sufficient dignity not to raise their hats, though Loiseau made a movement to do so.

Boule de Suif flushed crimson to the ears, and the three married women felt unutterably humiliated at being met thus by the soldier in company with the girl whom he had treated with such scant ceremony.

Then they began to talk about him, his figure, and his face. Madame Carré-Lamadon, who had known many officers and judged them as a connoisseur, thought him not at all bad-looking; she even regretted that he was not a Frenchman, because in that case he would have made a very handsome hussar, with whom all the women would assuredly have fallen in love.

When they were once more within doors they did not know what to do with themselves. Sharp words were exchanged apropos of the merest trifles. The silent dinner was soon over, and each one went to bed early in the hope of sleeping, and thus killing time.

They came down next morning with tired faces and irritable tempers; the women barely spoke to Boule de Suif.

A church bell summoned the faithful to a baptism. Boule de Suif had a child being brought up by peasants at Yvetot. She did not see him once a year, and never thought of him; but the idea of the child who was about to be baptized brought a sudden wave of tenderness for her own, and she insisted on being present at the ceremony.

As soon as she had gone out, the rest of the company looked at one another and then drew their chairs together; for they realized that they must decide on some course of action. Loiseau had an inspiration; he proposed that they should ask the officer to detain Boule de Suif only, and to let the rest go on their way.

Monsieur Follenvie was intrusted with this commission, but he returned to them almost immediately. The German, who knew human nature, had shown him the door. He intended to keep all the travelers until his condition had been complied with.

Whereupon Madame Loiseau's vulgar temperament broke bounds.

"We're not going to die of old age here!" she cried. "Since it's that trollop's trade to behave so with men I don't see that she has any right to refuse one more than another. I may as well tell you she took any lovers she could get at Rouen—even coachmen! Yes, indeed, Madame—the coachman

at the prefecture! I know it for a fact, for he buys his wine of us. And now that it is a question of getting us out of a difficulty she puts on virtuous airs, the hussy! For my part, I think this officer has behaved very well. Why, there were three others of us, any one of whom he would undoubtedly have preferred. But no, he contents himself with the girl who is common property. He respects married women. Only think. He is master here. He had only to say: 'I wish it!' and he might have taken us by force, with the help of his soldiers."

The two other women shuddered; the eyes of pretty Madame Carré-Lamadon glistened, and she grew pale, as if the officer were indeed in the act of laying violent hands on her.

The men, who had been discussing the subject among themselves, drew near. Loiseau, in a state of furious resentment, was for delivering up "that miserable woman," bound hand and foot, into the enemy's power. But the Count, descended from three generations of ambassadors, and endowed, moreover, with the lineaments of a diplomat, was in favor of more tactful measures.

"We must persuade her,' he said.

Then they laid their plans.

The women drew together; they lowered their voices, and the discussion became general, each giving his or her opinion. But the conversation was not in the least coarse. The ladies, in particular, were adepts at delicate phrases and charming sub-

tleties of expression to describe the most improper things. A stranger would have understood none of their allusions, so guarded was the language they employed. But, seeing that the thin veneer of modesty with which every woman of the world is furnished goes but a very little way below the surface, they began rather to enjoy this scandalous episode, and really were hugely delighted—feeling themselves in their element, furthering the schemes of lawless love with the gusto of a gourmand cook who prepares supper for another.

Their gayety returned of itself, so amusing at last did the whole affair seem to them. The Count uttered several rather risky witticisms, but so tactfully were they said that his audience could not help smiling. Loiseau in turn made some considerably broader jokes; but no one took offense; and the thought expressed with such brutal directness by his wife was uppermost in the minds of all: "Since it's the girl's trade why should she refuse this man more than another?" Dainty Madame Carré-Lamadon even seemed to think that in Boule de Suif's place she would be less inclined to refuse him than another.

The blockade was as carefully arranged as if they were investing a fortress. Each agreed on the rôle which he or she was to play, the arguments to be used, the maneuvers to be executed. They decided on the plan of campaign, the stratagems they were to employ, and the surprise attacks which were to

reduce this human citadel and force it to receive the enemy within its walls.

But Cornudet remained apart from the rest, taking no share in the plot.

So absorbed was the attention of all that Boule de Suif's entrance was almost unnoticed. But the Count whispered a gentle "Hush!" which made the others look up. She was there. They suddenly stopped talking, and a vague embarrassment prevented them for a few moments from addressing her. But the Countess, more practised than the others in the wiles of the drawing-room, asked her:

"Was the baptism interesting?"

The girl, still under the stress of emotion, told what she had seen and heard, described the faces, the attitudes of those present, and even the appearance of the church. She concluded with the words: "It does one good to pray sometimes."

Until luncheon the ladies contented themselves with being pleasant to her, so as to increase her confidence and make her yield to their advice.

As soon as they took their seats at table the attack began. First they opened a vague conversation on the subject of self-sacrifice. Ancient examples were quoted: Judith and Holofernes; then, irrationally enough, Lucrece and Sextus; Cleopatra and the hostile generals whom she reduced to abject slavery by a surrender of her charms. Next was recounted an extraordinary story, born of the imagination of these ignorant millionaires, which told

how the matrons of Rome seduced Hannibal, his lieutenants, and all his mercenaries at Capua. They held up to admiration all those women who from time to time have arrested the victorious progress of conquerors, made of their bodies a field of battle, a means of ruling, a weapon; who have vanquished by their heroic caresses hideous or detested beings, and sacrificed their chastity to vengeance and devotion.

All was said with due restraint and regard for propriety, the effect heightened now and then by an outburst of forced enthusiasm calculated to excite emulation.

A listener would have thought at last that the grandest rôle of woman on earth was a perpetual sacrifice of her person, a continual abandonment of herself to the caprices of a hostile soldiery.

The two nuns seemed to hear nothing, and to be lost in thought. Boule de Suif also was silent.

During the whole afternoon she was left to her reflections. But instead of calling her "Madame" as they had done hitherto, her companions addressed her simply as "Mademoiselle," without exactly knowing why, but as if desirous of making her descend a step in the esteem she had won, and forcing her to realize her degraded position.

Just as soup was served, Monsieur Follenvie reappeared, repeating his phrase of the evening before:

"The Prussian officer sends to ask whether Made-

moiselle Elizabeth Rousset has changed her mind."

Boule de Suif answered briefly:

"No, Monsieur."

But at dinner the coalition weakened. Loiseau made three unfortunate remarks. Each was racking his brains for further examples of self-sacrifice, and could find none, when the Countess, possibly without ulterior motive, and moved simply by a vague desire to do homage to religion, began to question the elder of the two nuns on the most striking facts in the lives of the saints. Now, it fell out that many of these had committed acts which would be crimes in our eyes, but the Church readily pardons such deeds when they are accomplished for the glory of God or the good of mankind. This was a powerful argument, and the Countess made the most of it. Then, whether by reason of a tacit understanding, a thinly veiled act of complaisance such as those who wear the ecclesiastical habit excel in, or whether merely as the result of sheer stupidity—a stupidity admirably adapted to further their designs—the old nun rendered formidable aid to the conspirators. They had thought her timid; she proved herself bold, talkative, bigoted. She was not troubled by the niceties of casuistry; her doctrines were as iron bars; her faith knew no doubt; her conscience no scruples. She looked on Abraham's sacrifice as natural enough, for she herself would not have hesitated to kill both father and mother if she had received a divine order to that ef-

fect; and nothing, in her opinion, could displease our Lord, provided the motive were praiseworthy. The Countess, putting to good use the consecrated authority of her unexpected ally, led her on to make a lengthy and edifying paraphrase of that axiom enunciated by a certain school of moralists: "The end justifies the means."

"Then, sister," she asked, "you think God accepts all methods, and pardons the act when the motive is pure?"

"Undoubtedly, Madame. An action reprehensible in itself often derives merit from the thought which inspires it."

And in this wise they talked on, fathoming the wishes of God, predicting His Judgments, describing Him as interested in matters which certainly must concern Him but little.

All was said with the utmost care and discretion, but every word uttered by the holy woman in her nun's garb weakened the indignant resistance of the courtesan. Then the conversation drifted somewhat, and the nun began to talk of the convents of her order, of her Superior, of herself, and of her fragile little neighbor, Sister St. Nicéphore. They had been sent for from Havre to nurse the hundreds of soldiers who were in hospitals, stricken with smallpox. She described these wretched invalids and their malady. And, while they themselves were detained on their way by the caprices of the Prussian officer, scores of Frenchmen might by dying,

whom they would otherwise have saved! For the nursing of soldiers was the old nun's specialty; she had been in the Crimea, in Italy, in Austria; and as she told the story of her campaigns she revealed herself as one of those holy sisters of the fife and drum who seem designed by nature to follow camps, to snatch the wounded from amid the strife of battle, and to quell with a word, more effectually than any general, the rough and insubordinate troopers —a masterful woman, her seamed and pitted face itself an image of the devastations of war.

No one spoke when she had finished for fear of spoiling the excellent effect of her words.

As soon as the meal was over the travelers retired to their rooms, whence they emerged the following day at a late hour of the morning.

Luncheon passed off quietly. The seed sown the preceding evening was being given time to germinate and bring forth fruit.

In the afternoon the Countess proposed a walk; then the Count, as had been arranged beforehand, took Boule de Suif's arm, and walked with her at some distance behind the rest.

He began talking to her in that familiar, paternal, slightly contemptuous tone which men of his class adopt in speaking to women like her, calling her "my dear child," and talking down to her from the height of his exalted social position and stainless reputation. He came straight to the point:

"So you prefer to leave us here, exposed like

yourself to all the violence which would follow on a repulse of the Prussian troops, rather than consent to surrender yourself, as you have done so many times in your life?"

The girl made no answer.

He tried kindness, argument, sentiment. He still bore himself as Count, even while adopting, when desirable, an attitude of gallantry, and making pretty—nay, even tender—speeches. He exalted the service she would render them, spoke of their gratitude; then, suddenly, using the familiar "thou":

"And you know, my dear, he could boast then of having made a conquest of a pretty girl such as he will not often find in his own country."

Boule de Suif did not answer, and joined the rest of the party.

As soon as they returned she went to her room, and was seen no more. The general anxiety was at its height. What would she do? If she still resisted, how awkward for them all!

The dinner hour struck; they waited for her in vain. At last Monsieur Follenvie entered, announcing that Mademoiselle Rousset was not well, and that they might sit down to table. They all pricked up their ears. The Count drew near the innkeeper, and whispered:

"Is it all right?"

"Yes."

Out of regard for propriety he said nothing to his companions, but merely nodded slightly toward

them. A great sigh of relief went up from all breasts; every face was lighted up with joy.

"Good!" shouted Loiseau, "I'll stand champagne all round if there's any to be found in this place." And great was Madame Loiseau's dismay when the proprietor came back with four bottles in his hands. They had all suddenly become talkative and merry; a lively joy filled all hearts. The Count seemed to perceive for the first time that Madame Carré-Lamadon was charming; the manufacturer paid compliments to the Countess. The conversation was animated, sprightly, witty, and, although many of the jokes were in the worst possible taste, all the company were amused by them, and none offended —indignation being dependent, like other emotions, on surroundings. And the mental atmosphere had gradually become filled with gross imaginings and unclean thoughts.

At dessert even the women indulged in discreetly worded allusions. Their glances were full of meaning; they had drunk much. The Count, who even in his moments of relaxation preserved a dignified demeanor, hit on a much-appreciated comparison of the condition of things with the termination of a winter spent in the icy solitude of the North Pole and the joy of shipwrecked mariners who at last perceive a southward track opening out before their eyes.

Loiseau, fairly in his element, rose to his feet, holding a glass of champagne.

"I drink to our deliverance!" he shouted.

All rose, and greeted the toast with applause. Even the two good sisters yielded to the solicitations of the ladies, and consented to moisten their lips with the foaming wine, which they had never before tasted. They declared it was like effervescent lemonade, but with a pleasanter flavor.

"It is a pity," said Loiseau, "that we have no piano; we might have had a quadrille."

Cornudet had not spoken a word or made a movement; he seemed plunged in serious thought, and now and then tugged furiously at his great beard, as if trying to add to its length. At last, toward midnight, when they were about to separate, Loiseau, whose gait was far from steady, suddenly slapped him on the back, saying thickly:

"You're not jolly to-night; why are you so silent, old man?"

Cornudet threw back his head, cast one swift and scornful glance over the assemblage, and answered:

"I tell you all, you have done an infamous thing!"

He rose, reached the door, and repeating: "Infamous!" disappeared.

A chill fell on the company. Loiseau himself looked foolish and disconcerted for a moment, but soon recovered his coolness, and, writhing with laughter, exclaimed:

"Really, you're all too green for anything!"

Pressed for an explanation, he related the "mys-

teries of the corridor," whereat his listeners were highly amused. The ladies could hardly contain their delight. The Count and Monsieur Carré-Lamadon laughed till they cried. They could hardly believe their ears.

"What! you are sure? He wanted——"

"I tell you I saw it with my own eyes."

"And she refused?"

"Because the Prussian was in the next room!"

"Surely you are mistaken?"

"I swear I'm telling you the truth."

The Count was choking with laughter. The manufacturer held his sides. Loiseau continued:

"So you may well imagine he doesn't think this evening's business at all amusing."

And all three began to laugh again, choking, coughing, almost ill with merriment.

Then they separated. But Madame Loiseau, who was nothing if not spiteful, remarked to her husband as they were on the way to bed that "that stuck-up little minx of a Carré-Lamadon had laughed on the wrong side of her mouth all the evening."

"You know," she said, "when women run after uniforms it's all the same to them whether the men who wear them are French or Prussian. It's perfectly disgusting!"

The next morning the snow showed dazzling white under a clear winter sun. The coach, ready at last, waited before the door; while a flock of

white pigeons, with pink eyes spotted in the centers with black, puffed out their white feathers and walked sedately between the legs of the six horses, picking at the steaming manure.

The driver, muffled in his sheepskin coat, was smoking a pipe on the box, and all the passengers, radiant with joy at their approaching departure, were putting up food for the remainder of the journey.

They were waiting only for Boule de Suif. At last she appeared.

She seemed rather shamefaced and embarrassed, and advanced with timid step toward her companions, who with one accord turned aside as if they had not seen her. The Count, with much dignity, took his wife by the arm, and removed her from the unclean contact.

The girl stood still, stupefied with astonishment; then, plucking up courage, accosted the manufacturer's wife with a humble "Good morning, Madame," to which the other replied merely with a slight and insolent nod accompanied by a look of outraged virtue. Everyone suddenly appeared extremely busy, and kept as far from Boule de Suif as if her skirts had been infected with some deadly disease. Then they hurried to the coach, followed by the despised courtesan, who, arriving last of all, silently took the place she had occupied during the first part of the journey.

The rest seemed neither to see nor to know her—

all save Madame Loiseau, who, glancing contemptuously in her direction, remarked, half aloud, to her husband:

"I am glad I am not sitting beside that creature!"

The lumbering vehicle started on its way.

At first no one spoke. Boule de Suif dared not even raise her eyes. She felt at once indignant with her neighbors and humiliated at having yielded to the Prussian into whose arms they had so hypocritically cast her.

But the Countess, turning toward Madame Carré-Lamadon, soon broke the embarrassing silence:

"I think you know Madame d'Etrelles?"

"Yes; she is a friend of mine."

"Such a charming woman!"

"Delightful! Exceptionally talented, and an artist to the finger-tips. She sings marvelously and draws to perfection."

The manufacturer was chatting with the Count, and amid the clatter of the window-panes a word of their conversation was now and then distinguishable: "Shares—maturity—premium—time-limit."

Loiseau, who had abstracted from the inn the timeworn pack of cards, thick with the grease of five years' contact with half-cleaned tables, began a game of bezique with his wife.

The good sisters, taking up simultaneously the long rosaries hanging from their waists, made the sign of the cross, and began to mutter in unison interminable prayers, their lips moving ever more and

more swiftly, as if they sought which should outdistance the other in the race of orisons; from time to time they kissed a medal, and crossed themselves anew, then resumed their rapid and unintelligible murmur.

Cornudet sat still, deep in thought.

At the end of three hours Loiseau gathered up the cards, and remarked that he was hungry.

His wife thereupon produced a parcel tied with string, from which she took out a piece of cold veal. This she cut into neat thin slices, and both began to eat.

"We may as well lunch, too," said the Countess. The rest agreed, and she unpacked the food that had been prepared for herself, the Count and the Carré-Lamadons. In one of those oval dishes, the lids of which are decorated with an earthenware hare, by way of showing that a game pie lies within, was a succulent delicacy consisting of the brown flesh of the game, larded with streaks of bacon and flavored with other meats chopped fine, A solid wedge of Gruyère cheese, which had been wrapped in a newspaper, bore the imprint: "Items of News," on its rich, oily surface.

The two good sisters brought to light a piece of sausage smelling strongly of garlic; and Cornudet, plunging both hands at once into the capacious pockets of his loose topcoat, produced from one four hard-boiled eggs and from the other a crust of bread. He removed the shells, threw them into

the straw beneath his feet, and began to devour the eggs, letting morsels of the bright yellow yolk fall on his mighty beard, where they looked like stars.

Boule de Suif, in the haste and confusion of her departure, had not thought of anything, and, choking with rage, she watched all these people placidly eating. At first, ill-suppressed wrath shook her whole person, and she opened her lips to shriek the truth at them, to overwhelm them with a volley of insults; but she could not utter a word, so choked was she with indignation.

No one looked at her, no one thought of her. She felt herself swallowed up in the scorn of these virtuous creatures, who had first sacrificed, then rejected her as a thing useless and unclean. Then she remembered her big basket full of the good things they had so greedily devoured: the two chickens coated in jelly, the pies, the pears, the four bottles of claret; and her emotion broke forth like a cord that is overstrained, and she was on the verge of tears. She made terrible efforts at self-control, drew herself up, swallowed the sobs which choked her; but the tears rose nevertheless, shone at the edges of her eyelids, and soon two heavy drops flowed slowly down her cheeks. Others followed more quickly, like water filtering from a rock, and fell, one after another, on her rounded bosom. She sat upright, with a fixed expression, her face pale and rigid, hoping desperately that no one saw her give way.

But the Countess noticed that she was weeping, and with a sign drew her husband's attention to the fact. He shrugged his shoulders, as if to say:

"Well, what of it? It's not my fault." Madame Loiseau chuckled triumphantly, and murmured: "She's crying for shame."

The two nuns had betaken themselves once more to their prayers, first wrapping the remainder of their sausage in paper.

Then Cornudet, who was digesting his eggs, stretched his long legs under the opposite seat, threw himself back, folded his arms, smiled like a man who has just thought of a good joke, and began to whistle the *Marseillaise*.

The faces of his neighbors clouded; the popular air evidently did not find favor with them; they grew nervous and irritable, and seemed ready to howl as a dog does at the sound of a street-organ. Cornudet saw the discomfort he was creating, and whistled louder; sometimes he even hummed the words:

Amour sacré de la patrie,
Conduis, soutiens, nos bras vengeurs,
Liberté, liberté, chérie,
Combats avec tes defenseurs!

The coach went more swiftly, the snow being harder now; and all the way to Dieppe, during the long, dreary hours of the journey, first in the gath-

ering twilight, then in the thick darkness, raising his voice above the rumbling of the vehicle, Cornudet continued with fierce obstinacy his vengeance and his monotonous whistling, forcing his weary and exasperated hearers to follow the song from end to end, to recall every word of every line, as each was repeated over and over again with untiring persistence.

And Boule de Suif still wept, and sometimes a sob she could not restrain was heard in the darkness between two stanzas of the song.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

As the small engine attached to the Neuilly train passed the Porte Maillot it whistled to warn all obstacles to clear the way and puffed like a man out of breath as it emitted its steam, its pistons moving rapidly with a noise like iron legs running. The train was going through the broad avenue that ends at the Seine. The oppressive heat of a July day lay over the whole city, and from the road, although not a breath of wind was stirring, a white, chalky, suffocating, warm dust arose, which clung to the moist skin, filled the eyes, and got into the lungs. People stood in their doorways trying to get a breath of air.

The windows of the train were open and the curtains fluttered in the wind. Very few passengers were inside, because on warm days people preferred the outside or the platforms. They consisted of stout women in odd costumes, of shopkeepers' wives from the suburbs, who tried to make up for the distinguished looks they did not possess by ill-assumed dignity; of men tired from office-work, with

sallow faces, bent shoulders, often having one shoulder higher than the other, in consequence of long hours of writing at a desk. Their uneasy and melancholy faces spoke of domestic troubles, also of continual want of money and disappointed hopes; for they all belonged to the army of poor, threadbare devils who vegetate economically in cheap, plastered houses, with a tiny piece of neglected garden, in the outskirts of Paris, near those fields where nightsoil is deposited.

A short, corpulent man, with bloated face, dressed in black and wearing a decoration in his buttonhole, was talking to a tall, thin man, dressed in a soiled white linen suit, with his coat all unbuttoned and a white Panama hat on his head. The former spoke so slowly and hesitatingly that it occasionally almost seemed as if he stammered; he was Monsieur Caravan, chief clerk in the Admiralty. The other, who had formerly been surgeon on board a merchant ship, had set up in practice in Courbevoie, where he applied to the wretched population of that district the vague remnants of medical knowledge which he had retained after an adventurous life. His name was Chenet, and gossip was current as to his morality.

Monsieur Caravan had always led the normal life of a man in a government office. For thirty years he had invariably gone the same way to his office every morning, and had met the same men going to business at the same time and almost on the same

spot; and he returned home every evening by the same road, and again met the same faces which he had seen grow old. Every morning, after buying his penny newspaper at the corner of the Faubourg St. Honore, he bought two rolls, and then he went into his office, like a culprit who is giving himself up to justice, and went to his desk as quickly as possible, feeling uneasy, as if he were expecting a rebuke for some possible neglect of duty.

Nothing ever had occurred to change the monotonous order of his existence, for no event affected him except the work of his office, perquisites, gratuities, and promotion. He never spoke of anything but of his duties, either at the Admiralty or at home, for he had married the portionless daughter of one of his colleagues. His mind, which was in a state of atrophy from his depressing daily work, had no other thoughts, hopes, or dreams than such as related to the office, and there was a constant source of bitterness which spoiled every pleasure he might have had, and that was the employment of so many naval officials—"tinsmiths," as they were called because of their silver-lace—as first grade clerks; and every evening at dinner he discussed the matter hotly with his wife, who shared his angry feelings, and proved to their own satisfaction that it was in every way unjust to give places in Paris to men who should properly have been employed in the navy.

Caravan was old now, and had hardly noticed

how his life was passing, for school had merely been exchanged for the office without any intermediate transition, and the ushers, at whom he had formerly trembled, were replaced by his chiefs, of whom he was terribly afraid. When he had to go into the rooms of these official despots, he trembled from head to foot, and that continual fear had given him a very awkward manner in their presence, a humble demeanor, and a kind of nervous stammering.

He knew no more about Paris than a blind man might know who was lead to the same spot by his dog every day; and if he read the account of any uncommon events, or scandals, in his penny journal, they appeared to him like fantastic tales, which some reporter had made up out of his own head, in order to amuse the inferior employés. He did not read political news, which his paper frequently altered, as the cause which subsidized it might require, for he was not fond of innovations, and when he went through the Avenue of the Champs-Elysées every evening, he looked at the surging crowd of pedestrians, and at the stream of carriages, as a traveler might who has lost his way in a strange country.

As he had completed his thirty years of obligatory service that year, on the first of January, he had had the cross of the Legion of Honor bestowed upon him, which, in the semi-military public offices, is a recompense for the miserable slavery—the offi-

cial phrase is "loyal services"—of the unfortunate convicts who are riveted to their desk. That unexpected dignity gave him a high and new idea of his own capacities, and altogether changed him. He immediately left off wearing light trousers and fancy waistcoats, and wore black trousers and long coats, on which his ribbon, which was very broad, showed off better. He shaved every morning, manicured his nails more carefully, changed his linen every two days, from a legitimate sense of what was proper, and out of respect to the national Order, of which he formed a part; and from that day he was another Caravan, scrupulously clean, majestic, and condescending.

At home, he said, "my cross," continually, and he had become so proud of it that he could not bear to see men wearing any other ribbon in their buttonholes. He was especially angry on seeing strange orders—"which nobody should be allowed to wear in France;" and he bore Chenet a particular grudge, as he met him on a train every evening, wearing a decoration of one kind or another, white, blue, orange, or green.

The conversation of the two men, from the Arc de Triomphe to Neuilly, was always the same, and on that day they discussed, first of all, various local abuses, which disgusted them both, and the Mayor of Neuilly received his full share of their censure. Then, as invariably happens in the company of a medical man, Caravan began to enlarge on the sub-

ject of illness, as, in that way, he hoped to obtain a little gratuitous advice, if he was careful not to show his hand. His mother had been causing him no little anxiety for some time; she had frequent and prolonged fainting fits, and, although she was ninety, she would not take care of herself.

Caravan became quite affected when he mentioned her great age, and more than once asked Dr. Chenet, emphasizing the word *doctor*—although he was not fully qualified, being only an *officier de santé*—whether he had often met anyone as old as that. And he rubbed his hands with pleasure; not, perhaps, that he cared very much about seeing the good woman last forever here on earth, but because the length of his mother's life was, as it were, an earnest of old age for himself, and he continued:

"In my family we live long, and I am sure that, unless I meet with an accident, I shall not die until I am very old."

The doctor looked at him with pity, and glanced for a moment at his neighbor's red face, his short, thick neck, his "corporation," as Chenet called it to himself, his two fat, flabby legs, and the apoplectic rotundity of the old official; and, raising the white Panama hat from his head, he said with a chuckle:

"I am not so sure of that, old fellow. Your mother is as tough as nails, but I should say that your life is not a very good one."

This rather disturbed Caravan, who did not speak

again until they arrived at their destination, where the two friends got out. Chenet asked his friend to have a glass of vermouth at the Café du Globe, opposite, which both were in the habit of frequenting. The proprietor, who was a friend of theirs, held out to them two fingers which they shook across the bottles on the counter; and then they joined three of their friends, who were playing dominoes, and who had been there since mid-day. They exchanged cordial greetings, with the usual question:—"Anything new?" And then the three players continued their game, and held out their hands without looking up, when the others said "Good-night;" after which both went home to dinner.

Caravan lived in a small two-story house in Courbevoie, near where the roads meet; the first floor was occupied by a hairdresser. Two bedrooms, a dining-room, and a kitchen formed the whole of their apartments, and Madame Caravan spent nearly all her time in cleaning them, while her daughter, Marie-Louise, who was twelve, and her son, Philippe-Auguste, were running about with all the dirty little mischievous children of the neighborhood, and playing in the gutter.

Caravan had installed his mother, whose avarice was notorious in the neighborhood, and who was terribly thin, in the room above them. She was always cross, and she never passed a day without quarreling and flying into furious rages. She would apostrophize the neighbors who were standing at

their own doors, the costermongers, the street-sweepers, and the street-boys, in the most violent language; and the latter, for revenge, would follow her at a distance when she went out, and call out rude things after her.

A little servant from Normandy, who was incredibly silly and thoughtless, performed the household work, and slept on the second floor in the same room with the old woman, for fear of anything happening to her in the night.

When Caravan entered, his wife, who suffered from a chronic passion for cleaning, was polishing with a piece of flannel, the mahogany chairs that stood about the room. She always wore cotton gloves, and adorned her head with a cap ornamented with many colored ribbons, which was always tilted over one ear; and whenever anyone caught her polishing, sweeping, or washing, she would say:

"I am not rich; everything is very simple in my house, but cleanliness is my luxury, and that is worth quite as much as any other."

As she was gifted with good, obstinate, practical common-sense, she led her husband in everything. Every evening during dinner, and afterward, when they were in their room, they talked over the business of the office for a long time, and although she was twenty years younger than he, Caravan confided everything to her as if she took the lead, and followed her advice in every matter.

She never had been pretty, and now she had

grown ugly; in addition to that, she was short and thin, while her careless and tasteless way of dressing herself concealed her few small feminine attractions, which might have been brought out if she had possessed any taste in dress. Her skirts were always awry, and she frequently scratched herself, no matter on what part of her person, totally indifferent as to who might see her, and so persistently that anyone who saw her might think that she was suffering from something like the itch. The only adornments that she allowed herself were silk ribbons, which she wore in great profusion, and of various colors mixed together, in the pretentious caps which she wore at home.

As soon as she saw her husband she rose and said, as she kissed his whiskers:

"Did you remember Potin, my dear?"

He fell into a chair, in consternation, for that was the fourth time on which he had forgotten a commission that he had promised to do for her.

"It is a fatality," he said; "it is of no use for me to think of it all day long, for I am sure to forget it in the evening."

But as he seemed so very sorry she merely said:

"You will think of it to-morrow, I am sure. Anything new at the office?"

"Yes, a great piece of news; another tinsmith has been appointed second chief clerk." She became very serious, and said:

"So he succeeds Ramon; that was the very place

that I wanted you to have. And what about Ramon?"

"He retires on his pension."

She became furious, her cap slid down on her shoulder, and she continued:

"There is nothing more to be done in that shop now. And what is the name of the new commissioner?"

"Borassot."

She took up the *Naval Year Book,* which she always kept close at hand, and looked for his record.

" 'Bonassot—Toulon. Born in 1851. Student-Commissioner in 1871. Sub-Commissioner in 1875.' Has he been to sea?" she continued. At that question Caravan's looks brightened, and he laughed until his sides shook.

"As much as Balin—as much as Balin, his chief." And he added an old office joke, and laughed more than ever:

"It would not even do to send them by water to inspect the Point-du-Jour, for they would be sick on the penny steamboats on the Seine."

But she remained as serious as if she had not heard him, and then she said in a low voice, as she scratched her chin:

"If we only had a deputy to fall back upon. When the Chamber hears everything that is going on at the Admiralty, the Minister will be turned out. . . ."

She was interrupted by a terrible noise on the

stairs. Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, who had just come in from the gutter, were slapping each other all the way upstairs. Their mother rushed at them furiously, and taking each of them by an arm, she dragged them into the room, shaking them vigorously; but as soon as they saw their father, they rushed up to him, and he kissed them affectionately, and taking one on each knee, began to talk to them.

Philippe-Auguste was an ugly, ill-kempt little imp, dirty from head to foot, with the face of an idiot, and Marie-Louise was already like her mother—spoke like her, repeated her words, and even imitated her movements. She also asked him whether there was anything fresh at the office, and he replied merrily:

"Your friend, Ramon, who comes and dines here every Sunday, is about to leave us, little one. There is a new second head clerk."

She looked at her father, and with a precocious child's pity, she said:

"Another man has been put over your head again!"

He stopped laughing, and did not reply, and in order to create a diversion, he said, addressing his wife, who was cleaning the windows:

"How is mamma, upstairs?"

Madame Caravan left off polishing, turned, pulled her cap up, and said, with trembling lips:

"Ah! yes; let us talk about your mother, for she

has made a pretty scene. Just imagine; a short time ago Madame Lebaudin, the hairdresser's wife, came upstairs to borrow a packet of starch of me, and, as I was not at home, your mother chased her out as if she were a beggar; but I gave it to the old woman. She pretended not to hear, as she always does when one tells her unpleasant truths, but she is no more deaf than I am, as you know. It is all a sham, and the proof of it is that she went up to her own room immediately, without saying a word."

Caravan, embarrassed, did not utter a word, and at that moment the little servant came in to announce dinner. In order to let his mother know, he took a broom-handle, which always stood in a corner, and rapped loudly on the ceiling three times, and then they went into the dining-room. Madame Caravan, junior, served the soup, and waited for the old woman, but she did not come, and as the soup was getting cold, they began to eat slowly, and when their plates were empty, they waited again, and Madame Caravan, who was furious, attacked her husband:

"She does it on purpose, you know that as well as I do. But you always defend her."

Not knowing which side to take, he sent Marie-Louise to fetch her grandmother, and he sat motionless, with his eyes cast down, while his wife tapped her glass angrily with her knife. In about a minute, the door flew open suddenly, and the child came

in again, out of breath and very pale, and said:

"Grandmamma has fallen on the floor."

Caravan jumped up, threw his napkin down, and rushed upstairs, while his wife, who thought it was some trick of her mother-in-law's, followed more slowly, shrugging her shoulders, as if to express her doubt. When they got upstairs, however, they found the old woman lying at full length in the middle of the room, and when they turned her over, they saw that she was insensible and motionless, while her skin looked more wrinkled and yellow than usual, her eyes were closed, her teeth clenched, and her thin body was stiff.

Caravan knelt down by her, and began to moan:

"Poor mother! my poor mother!" he said. But the other Madame Caravan said:

"Bah! She has only fainted again, that is all, and she has done it to prevent us from dining comfortably, you may be sure of that."

They put her on the bed, undressed her completely, and Caravan, his wife, and the servant began to rub her; but, in spite of their efforts, she did not recover consciousness, so they sent Rosalie, the servant, to fetch Dr. Chenet. He lived a long way off, on the quay leading toward Suresnes, and so it was some time before he arrived. He came at last, and, after looking at the old woman, he felt her pulse, listened for a heart-beat, and said:—"It is all over."

Caravan threw himself on the body, sobbing vio-

lently; he kissed his mother's rigid face, and wept so that great tears fell on the dead woman's face, like drops of water, and, naturally, Madame Caravan, junior, showed a decorous amount of grief, and uttered feeble moans as she stood behind her husband, while she rubber her eyes vigorously.

But, suddenly, Caravan raised himself, his thin hair in disorder, and, looking very ugly in his grief said:

"But . . . are you sure, doctor? . . . Are you sure? . . . ."

The doctor stooped over the body, and, handling it with professional dexterity, as a shopkeeper might when showing off his goods, he said:

"See, my dear friend, look at her eye."

He raised the eyelid, and the old woman's eye appeared altogether unaltered, unless, perhaps, the pupil was rather larger and Caravan felt a severe shock at the sight. Then Dr. Chenet took her thin arm, forced the fingers open, and said, angrily, as if he had been contradicted:

"Just look at her hand; I never make a mistake, you may be quite sure of that."

Caravan fell on the bed, and almost bellowed, while his wife, still whimpering, did what was necessary.

She brought the night-table, on which she spread a towel and placed four wax candles on it, which she lighted; then she took a sprig of box, which was hanging over the chimney-glass, and put it between

the four candles, in a plate, which she filled with clean water, as she had no holy water. But, after a moment's rapid reflection, she threw a pinch of salt into the water, no doubt, thinking she was performing some sort of act of consecration by doing that. When she had finished she remained standing motionless, and the doctor, who had been helping her, whispered to her:

"We must take Caravan away."

She nodded assent, and, going up to her husband, who was still on his knees, sobbing, she raised him by one arm, while Chenet took him by the other.

They put him into a chair, and his wife kissed his forehead, and then began to lecture him. Chenet enforced her words, and preached firmness, courage, and resignation—the very things that are always wanting in such overwhelming misfortunes—and then both took him by the arms again and led him out.

He was crying like a great child, with convulsive sobs; his arms hanging down, and his legs weak, and he went downstairs without knowing what he was doing, moving his feet mechanically. They put him into the chair he always occupied at dinner, in front of his empty soup plate. And there he sat, without moving, his eyes fixed on his glass, and so stupefied with grief that he could not even think.

In a corner, Madame Caravan was talking with the doctor and asking what the necessary formalities were, as she wanted to obtain practical informa-

tion. At last Dr. Chenet, who appeared to be waiting for something, took up his hat and prepared to go, saying that he had not dined yet; whereupon she exclaimed:

"What! you have not dined? Why, stay here, doctor; don't go. You shall have whatever we have, for, of course, you understand that we do not live sumptuously." He made excuses and refused, but she persisted, and said:

"You really must stay; at times like this people like to have friends near them, and, besides that, perhaps you will be able to persuade my husband to take some nourishment; he must keep up his strength."

The doctor bowed, and, putting down his hat, he said:

"In that case, I will accept your invitation, Madame."

She gave some orders to Rosalie, who seemed to have lost her head, and then sat down, "to pretend to eat," as she said, "to keep the doctor company."

The soup was brought in again, and Dr. Chenet took two helpings. Then came a dish of tripe, which exhaled a smell of onions, and which Madame Caravan made up her mind to taste.

"It is excellent," the doctor said, at which she smiled, and, turning to her husband, she said:

"Do take a little, my poor Alfred, only just to put something into your stomach. Remember that you have to pass all the night watching beside her."

He held out his plate, docilely, just as he would have gone to bed, if he had been told to, obeying her in everything, without resistance and without reflection, and he ate; the doctor helped himself three times, while Madame Caravan, from time to time, fished out a large piece at the end of her fork, and swallowed it with a sort of studied indifference.

When a salad bowl full of macaroni was brought in, the doctor said:

"Good! That is something I am very fond of." And this time Madame Caravan helped everybody. She even filled the saucers that were being scraped by the children, who, left to themselves, had been drinking wine without any water, and were now kicking each other under the table.

Chenet remembered that Rossini, the composer, had been very fond of that Italian dish, and suddenly exclaimed:

"Why! that rhymes, and one could begin some lines likes this:

"'The Maestro Rossini
Was fond of macaroni.'"

Nobody listened to him, however. Madame Caravan, who had suddenly grown thoughtful, was thinking of all the probable consequences of the death, while her husband made bread pellets, which he laid on the tablecloth and looked at with a fixed, idiotic stare. As he was devoured by thirst, he was continually raising his glass full of wine to his lips, and the consequence was that his mind, which had

been upset by the shock and grief, seemed to become vague, and his ideas danced about as digestion began.

The doctor, who, meanwhile, had been drinking steadily, was getting visibly intoxicated, and Madame Caravan herself felt the reaction that follows all nervous shocks, and was agitated and excited, and although she had drunk nothing but water she felt her head rather confused.

Presently, Chenet began to relate stories of deaths that appeared amusing to him. For in that suburb of Paris, that is full of people from the provinces, one finds that indifference toward death which all peasants show, were it even their own father or mother; that want of respect, that unconscious brutality which is so common in the country, and so rare in Paris, and he said:

"Why, I was sent for last week to the Rue du Puteaux, and when I went, I found the patient dead, and the whole family calmly sitting beside the bed finishing a bottle of aniseed cordial, which had been bought the night before to satisfy the dying man's fancy."

But Madame Caravan was not listening; she was continually thinking of the inheritance, and Caravan was incapable of understanding anything further.

Coffee was presently served, and it had been made very strong to give them courage. As every cup was well flavored with cognac, it made all their

faces red, and confused their ideas still more. To make matters still worse, Chenet suddenly seized the brandy bottle and poured out "a drop for each of them just to rinse their mouths with," as he termed it, and then, without speaking any more, overcome in spite of themselves, by that feeling of animal comfort which alcohol affords after dinner, they slowly sipped the sweet cognac, which formed a yellowish sirup at the bottom of their cups.

The children had fallen asleep, and Rosalie carried them off to bed. Caravan, mechanically obeying that wish to forget oneself which possesses all unhappy persons, helped himself to brandy again several times, and his dull eyes grew bright. At last the doctor rose to go, and seizing his friend's arm, he said:

"Come with me; a little fresh air will do you good. When one is in trouble, one must not remain in one spot."

The other obeyed mechanically, put on his hat, took his stick, and went out, and both of them walked arm-in-arm toward the Seine, in the starlight night.

The air was warm and sweet, for all the gardens in the neighborhood were full of flowers at that season of the year, and their fragrance, which is hardly perceptible during the day, seemed to awaken at the approach of night, and mingled with the light breezes which blew upon them in the darkness.

The broad avenue, with its two rows of gas

lamps, that extended as far as the Arc de Triomphe, was deserted and silent, but there was the distant roar of Paris, which seemed to have a reddish mist hanging over it. It was a kind of continual rumbling, which was at times answered by the whistle of a train at full speed, in the distance, traveling through the provinces to the ocean.

The fresh air on the faces of the two men rather overcame them at first, made the doctor lose his equilibrium a little, and increased Caravan's dizziness, from which he had suffered since dinner. He walked as if in a dream; his thoughts were paralyzed, although he felt no great grief, for he was in a state of mental torpor that prevented him from suffering, and he even felt a sense of relief which was increased by the mildness of the night.

When they reached the bridge, they turned to the right, and got the fresh breeze from the river, which rolled along, calm and melancholy, bordered by tall poplar trees, while the stars looked as if they were floating on the water and were moving with the current. A light, white mist that floated over the opposite banks filled their lungs with a sensation of cold, and Caravan stopped suddenly, for he was struck by that smell from the water, which brought back old memories to his mind. For, in his mind, he suddenly saw his mother again, in Picardy, as he had seen her years before, kneeling in front of their door, and washing the heaps of linen at her side, in the stream that ran through their garden.

He almost fancied that he could hear the sound of the wooden paddle with which she beat the linen in the calm silence of the country, and her voice, as she called out to him: "Alfred, bring me some soap." And he smelled that odor of running water, of the mist rising from the wet ground, that marshy smell which he should never forget, and which came back to him on this very evening on which his mother died.

He stopped, seized with a feeling of despair. A sudden flash seemed to reveal to him the extent of his calamity, and that breath from the river plunged him into an abyss of hopeless grief. His life seemed cut in half, his youth disappeared, swallowed up by that death. All the former days were over and done with, all the recollections of his youth had been swept away; for the future, there would be nobody to talk to him of what had happened in days gone by, of the people he had known of old, of his own part of the country, and of his past life; that was a part of his existence which existed no longer, and the rest might as well end now.

Then he saw "the mother" as she was when young, wearing well-worn dresses, which he remembered for such a long time that they seemed inseparable from her; he recollected her movements, the different tones of her voice, her habits, her predilections, her fits of anger, the wrinkles on her face, the movements of her thin fingers and all her well-known attitudes, which she would never

take again, and clutching hold of the doctor, he began to moan and weep. His thin legs began to tremble, his whole stout body was shaken by his sobs, all he could say was:

"My mother, my poor mother, my poor mother!"

But his companion, who was still drunk, and who intended to finish the evening in certain places of bad repute that he frequented secretly, made him sit down on the grass by the riverside, and left him almost immediately, under the pretext that he had to see a patient.

Caravan went on crying for some time, and when he had got to the end of his tears, when his grief had, so to say, run out, he again felt relief, repose, and sudden tranquillity.

The moon had risen, and bathed the horizon in its soft light.

The tall poplar trees showed a silvery sheen, and the mist on the plain looked like drifting snow; the river, in which the stars were reflected, and which had a sheen as of mother-of-pearl, was gently rippled by the wind. The air was soft and sweet, and Caravan inhaled it almost greedily, and thought that he could perceive a feeling of freshness, of calm and of superhuman consolation pervading him.

He actually resisted that feeling of comfort and relief, and kept on saying to himself: "My mother, my poor mother!" . . . and tried to make him-

self cry, from a kind of conscientious feeling; but he could not succeed in doing so any longer and those sad thoughts, which had made him sob so bitterly a short time before, had almost passed away. In a few moments, he rose to go home, and returned slowly, under the influence of that serene night, and with a heart soothed in spite of himself.

When he reached the bridge, he saw that the last car was ready to start, and behind it were the brightly lighted windows of the Café du Globe. He felt a longing to tell somebody of his loss, to excite pity, to make himself interesting. He put on a sad face, pushed open the door, and went up to the counter, where the landlord still was. He had counted on creating a sensation, and had hoped that everybody would get up and come to him with outstretched hands, and say: "Why, what is the matter with you?" But nobody noticed his disconsolate face, so he rested his two elbows on the counter, and burying his face in his hands, he murmured: "Good heavens! Good heavens!"

The landlord looked at him and said: "Are you ill, Monsieur Caravan?"

"No, my friend," he replied, "but my mother has just died."

"Ah!" the other exclaimed, and as a customer at the other end of the establishment asked for a glass of Bavarian beer, he went to attend to him, leaving Caravan almost stupefied at his lack of sympathy.

The three domino players were sitting at the same table which they had occupied before dinner, totally absorbed in their game, and Caravan went up to them in search of pity, but as none of them appeared to notice him, he made up his mind to speak.

"A great misfortune has happened to me since I was here," he said.

All three slightly raised their heads at the same instant, but kept their eyes fixed on the pieces which they held in their hands.

"What do you say?"

"My mother has just died;" whereupon one of them said:

"Oh! the devil!" with that false air of sorrow which indifferent people assume. Another, who could not find anything to say, emitted a sort of sympathetic whistle, shaking his head at the same time, and the third turned to the game again, as if he were saying to himself: "Is that all?"

Caravan had expected some of those expressions that are said to "come from the heart," and when he saw how his news was received, he left the table, indignant at their calmness at their friend's sorrow, although this sorrow had stupefied him so that he scarcely felt it any longer. When he got home his wife was waiting for him in her nightgown, and sitting in a low chair by the open window, still thinking of the inheritance.

"Undress yourself," she said; "we can talk."

He raised his head, and looking at the ceiling, said:

"But . . . there is nobody upstairs."

"I beg your pardon, Rosalie is with her, and you can go and take her place at three o'clock in the morning, after you have had some sleep."

He only partially undressed, however, so as to be ready for anything that might happen, and after tying a silk handkerchief around his head lay down to rest, and for some time neither spoke. Madame Caravan was thinking.

Her nightcap was adorned with a red bow, and was pushed rather over one ear, as was the way with all the caps she wore, and presently she turned towards him and said:

"Do you know whether your mother made a will?"

He hesitated for a moment, and then replied:

"I . . . I do not think so. . . . No, I am sure that she did not."

His wife looked at him, and she said, in a low, angry tone:

"I call that infamous; here we have been wearing ourselves out for ten years in looking after her, and have boarded and lodged her! Your sister would not have done so much for her, nor I either, if I had known how I was to be rewarded! Yes, it is a disgrace to her memory! I daresay you will tell me that she paid us, but one cannot pay one's children in ready money for what they do; that

obligation is recognized after death; at any rate, that is how honorable people act. So I have had all my worry and trouble for nothing! Oh, that is fine! that is very fine!"

Poor Caravan, who was almost distracted, kept on repeating:

"My dear, my dear, please be quiet."

She grew calmer by degrees, and, resuming her usual voice and manner, she continued:

"We must let your sister know to-morrow."

He started, and said:

"Of course, we must; I had forgotten all about it; I will send her a telegram the first thing in the morning."

"No," she replied, like a woman who had foreseen everything; "no, do not send it before ten or eleven o'clock, so that we may have time to do things before she comes. It does not take more than two hours to get here from Charenton, and we can say that you lost your wits from grief. If we let her know in the course of the day, that will be soon enough, and will give us time to look around."

Caravan put his hand to his forehead, and, in the same timid voice in which he always spoke of his chief, the very thought of whom made him tremble, he said:

"I must let them know at the office."

"Why?" she replied. "On occasions like this, it is always excusable to forget. Take my advice, and don't let him know; your chief will not be able

to say anything to you, and you will put him in a nice fix."

"Oh! yes, that I shall, and he will be in a terrible rage, too, when he notices my absence. Yes, you are right; it is a capital idea, and when I tell him that my mother is dead he will be obliged to hold his tongue."

And he rubbed his hands in delight at the joke, when he thought of his chief's face; while upstairs lay the body of the dead woman, with the servant asleep beside it.

But Madame Caravan grew thoughtful, as if she were preoccupied by something she did not care to mention, and at last she said:

"Your mother had given you her clock, had she not; the girl playing at cup and ball?"

He thought for a moment, and then replied:

"Yes, yes; she said to me, but it was a long time ago, when she first came here: 'I shall leave the clock to you, if you look after me well.'"

Madame Caravan was reassured, and regained her serenity and said:

"Well, then, you must go and fetch it out of her room, for if we get your sister here she will prevent us from taking it."

He hesitated.

"Do you think so? . . ."

That made her angry.

"I certainly think so; once it is in our possession, she will know nothing at all about where it

came from; it belongs to us. It is just the same with the chest of drawers with the marble top that is in her room; she gave it to me one day when she was in a good temper. We will bring it down at the same time."

Caravan, however, seemed incredulous, and said:

"But, my dear, this is a great responsibility to assume!"

She turned on him furiously.

"Oh! Indeed! Will you never change? You would let your children die of hunger rather than make a move. Does not that chest of drawers belong to us, since she gave it to me? And if your sister is not satisfied, let her tell me so, me! I don't care a straw for your sister. Come, get up, and we will bring down what your mother gave us immediately."

Trembling and vanquished, he got out of bed, and began to put on his trousers, but she stopped him:

"It is not worth while to dress yourself; your underclothes are quite enough; I mean to go as I am."

They both left the room in their night clothes, went upstairs quite noiselessly, opened the door and went into the room, where the four lighted candles and the plate with the sprig of box alone seemed to be watching the old woman in her rigid repose; for Rosalie, who was lying back in the easy-chair with her legs stretched out, her hands folded in her lap, and her head on one side, was also quite mo-

tionless, and was snoring with her mouth wide open.

Caravan took the clock, which was one of those grotesque objects that were produced so plentifully under the Empire. A girl in gilt bronze was holding a cup and ball, and the ball formed the pendulum.

"Give that to me," his wife said, "and take the marble slab off the chest of drawers."

He put the marble slab on his shoulder with considerable effort, and they left the room. Caravan had to stoop in the doorway, and trembled as he went downstairs, while his wife walked backward, so as to light him, and held the candlestick in one hand, carrying the clock under the other arm.

When they were in their own room, she heaved a sigh.

"We have got over the worst part of the job," she said; "so now let us go and fetch the other things."

But the bureau drawers were full of the old woman's clothes, which they must manage to hide somewhere, and Madame Caravan soon thought of a plan.

"Go and get that wooden packing-case in the vestibule; it is worth hardly anything, and we may just as well put it here."

And when he had brought it upstairs, they began to fill it. One by one, they took out all the collars, cuffs, chemises, caps, all the well-worn things that had belonged to the poor woman lying there behind them, and arranged them methodically in the

wooden box, in such a manner as to deceive Madame Braux, the deceased woman's other child, who would arrive the next day.

When they had finished, they first of all carried the bureau drawers downstairs, and the remaining portion afterward, each of them holding an end, and it was some time before they could make up their minds where it would stand best; but at last they decided upon their own room, opposite the bed, between the two windows, and as soon as it was in its place, Madame Caravan filled it with her own belongings. The clock was placed on the chimney-piece in the dining-room; they looked to see what the effect was, and were delighted with it, agreeing that nothing could be better. Then they retired, she blew out the candle, and soon everybody in the house was asleep.

It was broad daylight when Caravan opened his eyes again. His mind was rather confused when he woke up, and he did not clearly remember what had happened, for a few moments; when he did, he felt a weight at his heart, and jumped out of bed, almost ready to cry again.

He hastened to the room overhead, where Rosalie was still sleeping in the same position as the night before, not having awakened once. He sent her to her work, put fresh tapers in the place of those that had burned out, and then he looked at his mother, revolving in his brain those apparently profound thoughts, those religious and philosophical

commonplaces, which trouble people of mediocre intelligence in the presence of death.

But as his wife was calling him, he went downstairs. She had written out a list of what had to be done during the morning, and he was horrified when he saw the memorandum:

1. Report the death at the Mayor's office.
2. See the doctor who had attended her.
3. Order the coffin.
4. Give notice at the church.
5. Go to the undertaker.
6. Order the notices of her death at the printer's.
7. Go to the lawyer.
8. Telegraph the news to all the family.

Besides all this, there were a number of small commissions; so he took his hat and went out. As the news had spread abroad, Madame Caravan's female friends and neighbors soon began to come in, and begged to be allowed to see the body. There had been a scene between husband and wife at the hairdresser's on the ground floor, about the matter, while a customer was being shaved. The wife, who was knitting steadily, said: "Well, there's one less, and as great a miser as one ever meets with. I certainly did not care for her, but nevertheless, I must go and have a look at her."

The husband, while lathering his customer's chin, said: "That is another queer fancy! Nobody but a woman would think of such a thing. It is not enough for them to worry you during life, but they

cannot even leave you in peace when you are dead." But his wife, without being in the least disconcerted, replied: "The feeling is stronger than I am, and I must go. It has been on me since the morning. If I were not to see her I should think about it all my life; but when I have had a good look at her I shall be satisfied."

The knight of the razor shrugged his shoulders, and remarked in a low voice to the gentleman whose cheek he was scraping: "I just ask you, what sort of ideas do you think these confounded women have? I should not amuse myself by going to see a corpse!" His wife had heard him, and replied very quietly: "But it is so, it is so." And then, putting her knitting on the counter, she went upstairs, to the first floor, where she met two other neighbors, who had just come, and who were discussing the event with Madame Caravan, who was giving them the details; and they all went together to the death chamber. The four women went in softly, and, one after the other, sprinkled the bedclothes with holy water, knelt, and made the sign of the cross while they mumbled a prayer. Then they rose from their knees, and looked for some time at the corpse, with round, wide-open eyes and mouths partly open, while the daughter-in-law of the dead woman, with her handkerchief to her face, pretended to be sobbing piteously.

When she turned about to walk away, whom should she perceive standing close to the door but

Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, who were curiously taking note of all that was going on. Then forgetting her pretended grief, she threw herself upon them with uplifted hands, crying out in a furious voice, "Will you get out of this, you dirty brats?"

Ten minutes later, going upstairs again with another contingent of neighbors, she prayed, wept profusely, performed all her duties, and found once more her two children, who had followed her upstairs. She again boxed their ears soundly; but the next time she paid no heed to them, and at each fresh arrival of visitors the two children always followed in the wake, kneeling down in a corner, and imitating slavishly everything they saw their mother do.

When the afternoon came, the crowds of inquisitive ones began to diminish, and soon there were no more visitors. Madame Caravan, returning to her own apartments, began to make the necessary preparations for the funeral, and the dead woman was left alone.

The window of the room was open. A torrid heat entered along with clouds of dust; the flames of the four candles were flickering beside the immobile corpse; and upon the cloth which covered the face, the closed eyes, the two stretched-out hands, small flies alighted, came, went, and careered up and down incessantly, being the only companions of the old woman for the time being.

Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, however, had now left the house, and were running up and down the street. They were soon surrounded by their playmates, by little girls, especially, who were older and who were much more interested in all the mysteries of life, asking grown-up questions.

"Then your grandmother is dead?"

"Yes, she died yesterday evening."

"What does a dead person look like?"

Then Marie began to explain, telling all about the candles, the sprig of box, and the face of the corpse. It was not long before great curiosity was aroused in the minds of all the children, and they asked to be allowed to go upstairs to look at the departed.

Marie-Louise at once organized a first expedition, consisting of five girls and two boys—the biggest and the most courageous. She made them take off their shoes so that they might not be discovered. The troop filed into the house and went up the stairs as stealthily as an army of mice.

Once in the chamber, the little girl, imitating her mother, regulated the ceremony. She solemnly walked in advance of her comrades, went down on her knees, made the sign of the cross, moved her lips as in prayer, rose, sprinkled the holy water, and while the children, all crowded together, were approaching—frightened and curious, and eager to look at the face and hands of the deceased—she began suddenly to simulate sobbing, and to bury her

eyes in her little handkerchief. Then, becoming instantly consoled, on thinking of the other children who were downstairs waiting at the door, she ran downstairs followed by the rest, returning in a minute with another group, then a third; for all the little ragamuffins of the countryside, even to the little beggars in rags, had congregated in order to participate in this new pleasure; and each time she repeated her mother's grimaces with absolute perfection.

At length, however she became tired. Some game or other drew the children away from the house, and the old grandmother was left alone, forgotten suddenly by everybody.

The room was growing dark, and upon the dry and rigid features of the corpse the fitful flames of the candles cast patches of light.

Toward eight o'clock, Caravan went to the chamber of death, closed the windows, and renewed the candles. He was now quite composed on entering the room, accustomed already to regard the corpse as if it had been there for months. He even went the length of declaring that, as yet, there were no signs of decomposition, making this remark just at the moment when he and his wife were about to sit down at table. "Pshaw!" she responded, "she is now in wood; she will keep for a year."

The soup was eaten in silence. The children, who had been left to themselves all day, now worn out by fatigue, were sleeping soundly on their

chairs, and nobody ventured to break the silence. Suddenly the flame of the lamp went down, Madame Caravan immediately turned up the wick, a hollow sound ensued, and the light went out. They had forgotten to buy oil. To send for it now to the grocer's would keep back the dinner, and they began to look for candles; but none were to be found except the tapers which had been placed upon the table upstairs, in the death chamber.

Madame Caravan, always prompt in her decisions, quickly despatched Marie-Louise to fetch two, and her return was awaited in total darkness.

The footsteps of the girl who had ascended the stairs were distinctly heard. There was silence for a few seconds and then the child descended precipitately. She threw open the door, and in a choking voice murmured: "Oh! papa, grandmother is dressing herself!"

Caravan bounded to his feet with such precipitance that his chair fell over against the wall. He stammered out: "You say? . . . What are you saying?"

But Marie-Louise, gasping with emotion, repeated: "Grand . . . grand . . . grandmother is putting on her clothes; she is coming downstairs."

Caravan rushed boldly up the staircase, followed by his wife, dumfounded; but he came to a standstill before the door of the second floor, overcome with terror, not daring to enter. What was he

about to see? Madame Caravan, more courageous, turned the handle of the door and stepped forward into the room.

The room seemed to have become darker, and in the middle of it a tall emaciated figure moved about. The old woman was standing up, and in awakening from her lethargic sleep, before even regaining full consciousness, in turning upon her side, and raising herself on her elbow, she had extinguished three of the candles which burned near the bed. Then, gaining strength, she got off the bed and began to look for her clothes. The absence of her chest of drawers had at first worried her, but, after a little, she had succeeded in finding her garments at the bottom of the wooden box, and was now quietly dressing. She emptied the plateful of water, replaced the sprig of box behind the looking-glass, and arranged the chairs in their places, and was ready to go downstairs when her son and daughter-in-law appeared before her.

Caravan rushed forward, seized her by the hands, embraced her with tears in his eyes, while his wife, who was behind him, repeated in a hypocritical tone of voice: "Oh, what a blessing! What a blessing!"

But the old woman, without being at all moved, without even appearing to understand, rigid as a statue, and with glazed eyes, simply asked: "Will dinner soon be ready?"

He stammered out, not knowing what he said:

"Oh, yes, mother, we have been waiting for you."

And, with an alacrity unusual in him, he took her arm, while Madame Caravan, the younger, seized the candle and lighted them downstairs, walking backward in front of them, step by step, just as she had done the previous night for her husband, who was carrying the marble.

On reaching the first floor, she almost ran against people who were ascending the stairs. It was the Charenton family, Madame Braux, followed by her husband.

The wife, tall and stout, with a prominent stomach, opened wide her terrified eyes, and was ready to make her escape. The husband, a socialist shoemaker, a little hairy man, the perfect image of a monkey, murmured, quite unconcerned: "Well, what next? Is she resurrected?"

As soon as Madame Caravan recognized them, she made despairing signs to them, then, speaking aloud, she said: "Why, here you are! What a pleasant surprise!"

But Madame Braux, dumbfounded, understood nothing; she responded in a low voice: "It was your telegram that brought us; we thought that all was over."

Her husband, who was behind her, pinched her to make her keep silent. He added with a sly laugh, which his thick beard concealed: "It was very kind of you to invite us here. We set out post haste;" which remark showed the hostility which had for a long time reigned between the

households. Then, just as the old woman reached the last steps, he pushed forward quickly and rubbed his hairy face against her cheeks, shouting in her ear, because of her deafness: "How well you look, mother; strong as usual, eh?"

Madame Braux, in her stupefaction at seeing alive the old woman whom they all believed to be dead, dared not even embrace her; and her enormous bulk blocked up the passage and hindered the others from advancing. The old woman, uneasy and suspicious, but without speaking, looked at everyone around her; and her little gray eyes, piercing and hard, fixed themselves now on one and now on the other, and they were so full of meaning that the children became frightened.

Caravan, to explain matters said: "She has been somewhat ill, but she is better now; quite well, indeed, are you not, mother?"

Then the good woman, continuing to walk, replied in a husky voice, as if it came from a distance: "It was syncope. I heard you all the while."

An embarrassing silence followed. They entered the dining-room, and in a few minutes all sat down to an improvised dinner.

Only M. Braux retained his self-possession; his gorilla features grinned wickedly, while he let fall some words of double meaning which painfully disconcerted every one.

But the doorbell kept ringing every second; and

Rosalie, distracted, came to call Caravan, who rushed out, throwing down his napkin. His brother-in-law even asked him whether it was not one of his reception days, to which he stammered out, in answer: "No, only a few packages; nothing more."

A parcel was brought in, which he began to open carelessly, and the mourning announcements with black borders appeared unexpectedly. Reddening up to the very eyes, he closed the package hurriedly, and pushed it under his waistcoat.

His mother had not seen it! She was looking intently at her clock which stood on the mantelpiece, and the embarrassment increased in midst of a dead silence. Turning her wrinkled face toward her daughter, the old woman, in whose eyes gleamed malice, said: "On Monday you must take me away from here, so that I can see your little girl. I want so much to see her." Madame Braux, her features illuminated, exclaimed: "Yes, mother, that I will," while Madame Caravan, the younger, who had turned pale, endured the most excruciating agony. The two men, however, gradually drifted into conversation, and soon became embroiled in a political discussion. Braux maintained the most revolutionary and communistic doctrines, his eyes glowing, and gesticulating and throwing about his arms. "Property, sir," he said, "is a robbery perpetrated on the working classes; the land is the common property of every man; hereditary rights are an infamy and a disgrace." But

here he suddenly stopped, looking as if he had just said something foolish; then added, in softer tones: "But this is not the proper moment to discuss such things."

The door opened, and Dr. Chenet appeared. For a moment he seemed bewildered, but, regaining his usual smirking expression of countenance, he jauntily approached the old woman, and said: "Aha! mamma, you are better today. Oh! I never had any doubt but you would come round again; in fact, I said to myself as I was mounting the staircase, 'I have an idea that I shall find the old lady on her feet once more';" and as he patted her gently on the back: "Ah! she is as solid as the Pont-Neuf; she will bury us all; see if she does not."

He sat down, accepted the coffee that was offered him, and soon began to join in the conversation of the two men, backing up Braux, for he himself had been mixed up in the Commune.

The old woman, now feeling herself fatigued, wished to retire. Caravan rushed forward. She looked him steadily in the eye and said: "You, you must carry my clock and chest of drawers upstairs again without a moment's delay." "Yes, mamma," he replied, gasping; "yes, I will do so." The old woman then took the arm of her daughter and withdrew from the room. The two Caravans remained astounded, silent, plunged in the deepest despair, while Braux rubbed his hands and sipped his coffee, gleefully.

Suddenly Madame Caravan, consumed with rage, rushed at him, exclaiming: "You are a thief, a footpad, a cur. I would spit in your face, if . . . I would . . .I . . .would . . ." She could find nothing further to say, suffocating as she was, with rage, while he went on sipping his coffee, with a smile.

His wife returning just then, Madame Caravan attacked her sister-in-law, and the two women—the one with her enormous bulk, the other epileptic and spare, with changed voices and trembling hands—flew at each other with words of abuse.

Chenet and Braux interposed, and the latter taking his wife by the shoulders pushed her out of the door before him, shouting: "Go on, you fool! you talk too much;" and the two were heard in the street quarreling until they disappeared.

Dr. Chenet also took his departure, leaving the Caravans alone, face to face. The husband fell back on his chair, and with the cold sweat standing out in beads on his temples, murmured: "What shall I say to my chief to-morrow?"

THE ARTIST'S MODEL

THE sun was shining on a beautiful July day on the little crescent-shaped town of Etretât, with its white cliffs, shining pebbles and blue sea. At the ends of the crescent were two points of land; the smaller one to the right, the larger to the left, stretching out into the quiet water.

On the beach a crowd was watching the bathers. On the porch of the Casino another crowd, some resting, some walking, was displaying under the bright sky a wonderful garden of beautiful gowns set off by red and blue parasols, on which were embroidered large silk flowers.

Along the promenade, at the end of the porch, other persons of quiet taste, were walking slowly, far from the elegant throng.

A famous young painter, Jean Summer, was strolling sadly beside an invalid's chair, in which a young woman was resting, his wife. A servant was slowly pushing this rolling armchair and the cripple was sadly contemplating the bright sky, the beautiful day, and the joy of others.

They neither spoke to nor looked at each other.

"Let us stop a minute," said the woman.

They stopped, and the artist sat on a little camp-chair, offered him by the servant.

Those passing near the silent and motionless couple looked at them pityingly. There was a romantic story concerning his devotion, to the effect that, moved by her love, he had married her notwithstanding her infirmity.

Not far away two young men, seated on a capstan with their gaze lost in the distance, were talking.

"No, that is not true; I tell you I know Jean Summer very well."

"But then why did he marry her? She was already crippled at the time of the marriage, wasn't she?"

"Certainly. He married her . . . well . . . foolishly, of course!"

"Well? . . ."

"There is no 'well,' my friend, there is no 'well.' A man is a fool because he is a fool. And then, you know very well that artists have a fancy for contracting ridiculous marriages; almost all of them marry models, former sweethearts, wrecks of every description. Why? Who knows? One would think that constant intercourse with the genus model would disgust them forever with this class of females. Not at all. After having them pose for them they marry them. Just read that

little book by Alphonse Daudet: *Artists' Wives.*

"As to the couple you see there, the accident occurred in a peculiar and terrible manner. The little woman played a comedy, or rather a frightful tragedy. She risked all for everything. Was she sincere? Did she love Jean? How can one tell? Who can ever tell exactly how much ruse and how much sincerity there is in the actions of a woman? They are always sincere in an eternal mobility of impressions. They are hot-tempered, criminal, devoted, admirable, and base, in obedience to incomprehensible emotions. They lie continually without wishing to, without knowing it, without understanding it and, notwithstanding all that, they have an absolute frankness of sensations and of sentiments which they express by violent, unexpected, incomprehensible resolutions which set at naught our habits of thought and all our selfish combinations. The unexpectedness and rapidity of their decisions are the reason why they remain for us hopeless puzzles. We always ask ourselves: 'Are they sincere? Are they false?'

"But, my friend, they are simultaneously sincere and false, because it is in their nature to be both in extremes, and neither one nor the other.

"Observe the methods which the best of them use in order to obtain something which they desire. They are at once complex and simple; so complicated that we never can guess them beforehand, so simple that after being made victims, we can-

not help being surprised and saying to ourselves: 'What! Was I as gullible as that?'

"And they always succeed, especially when marriage is the object.

"But here is the story of Jean Summer:

"The little woman was, naturally, a model. She used to pose for him. She was pretty, extremely elegant, and blessed, so they say, with a divine figure. He fell in love with her, as one falls in love with any seductive woman whom one sees very often. He imagined that he loved her with all his heart. That is a singular phenomenon. As soon as you desire a woman you sincerely believe that you could not go through life without her. You know perfectly well that the same thing has happened to you before; that disgust has always followed possession; that in order to live out one's life beside another being, not a quickly extinguished, brutal, physical appetite is needed, but a harmony of temperament, of soul, and of character. You must know how to distinguish in this seduction which one feels, whether it is caused by physical attraction, by a certain sensuous intoxication, or by a sweet charm of the mind.

"He thought that he loved her; he made her many promises of faithfulness, and he lived entirely with her.

"She was really charming, gifted with the elegant simplicity which the Parisian woman so easily acquires. She chatted, she gossiped, she said

foolish little things that seemed witty because of her quaint little ways. Her gestures were always graceful, well made and pleasing to the eye of an artist. Whether she was lifting her arms or leaning over, whether she was getting into a carriage or holding out her hand to you, her movements were always exactly right.

"For three months Jean did not notice that she was like all other models. They hired, for the summer, a little house at Andressy.

"I was there one evening when the first doubts dawned upon my friend.

"As the night was glorious we wished to take a walk beside the river. The moon cast a shimmering light across the water which was reflected back in silver beams by the eddies of the swirling current.

"We were walking along the banks, slightly intoxicated by this vague exaltation which is cast over us on these dream-evenings. We felt like accomplishing superhuman things, like loving unknown, beautifully poetic beings. We felt within us strange raptures, desires, and aspirations. We were silent, carried away by the freshness of the beautiful night, and by this mystic moonlight which seems to shine through the body, to penetrate it, to bathe and perfume our minds and to fill them with joy.

"Suddenly Joséphine (her name is Joséphine) exclaimed:

"'Oh! did you see the big fish jump over there?'

"He answered without looking, without even knowing:

"'Yes, dearie.'

"She grew angry.

"'No, you didn't see it, your back was turned.'

"He smiled:

"'I know it. It's such a beautiful evening that I wasn't thinking of anything.'

"She was silent for a minute, and then asked:

"'Are you going to Paris to-morrow?'

"He answered:

"'I don't know.'

"And once more she grew angry.

"'If you think it's amusing to walk without saying anything, you're mistaken. Anybody but a fool would say something!'

"He did not answer. Then, with her perverse woman's instinct, realizing that she would exasperate him, she began to hum a tune which she knew he detested.

"He murmured:

"'Please stop!'

"Furious, she cried:

"'Why do you wish me to stop?'

"He answered:

"'You are spoiling the scenery!'

"Then came the odious, foolish scene, with its unexpected reproaches, its tempestuous recrimina-

tions, and then tears. She went through the whole programme. They went home. He had let her run on without answering, deadened by this divine evening and thunderstruck by this storm of abuse.

"Three months later they were hopelessly struggling with these invincible and invisible bonds with which custom surrounds our life. She held him, oppressed and tortured him. They quarreled from morning till night, insulting and wounding each other.

"Finally he decided to break off at any price. He sold all his canvases, borrowed money from his friends, scraped together twenty thousand francs (he was not yet famous), and one morning he left them on the mantelpiece with a farewell letter.

"He sought shelter with me.

"At about three o'clock in the afternoon the doorbell rang. I opened the door. A woman jumped at me, pushed me aside and rushed into my studio; it was she!

"He rose on seeing her enter.

"She threw the envelope containing the money at his feet with a gesture that was really noble and said dryly:

" 'Here is your money! I don't want it.'

"She was very pale, trembling, and undoubtedly prepared to do anything. As for him, I saw him also grow pale, pale from anger and exasperation, and ready to commit any act of violence.

" 'What do you wish?' he asked.

" 'I do not wish to be treated like any common woman,' she answered. 'You sought me out; you took me. I asked nothing of you. Keep me!'

"He stamped his foot:

" 'No, this is too much! If you think that you . . .'

"I had taken him by the arm.

" 'Quiet, Jean. Let me handle this.'

"I went to her, and quietly, little by little, I talked reason to her. I used all the arguments commonly employed on these occasions. She listened to me, motionless, obstinate and dumb.

"At last, no longer knowing what to do, and seeing that the affair might end badly, I resorted to a last stratagem. I said:

" 'He still loves you, little one, but his family wish him to marry, and you understand! . . .'

"She jumped up:

" 'Ah . . . Ah! . . . I understand. . . .'

"Turning toward him:

" 'You . . . you . . . are going to be married?'

"He answered firmly:

" 'Yes.'

"She stepped forward:

" 'If you marry, I will kill myself . . . do you understand?'

"Shrugging his shoulders he answered:

" 'Well . . . go ahead . . . kill yourself!'

"She gasped two or three times, her throat contracted by terrible agony:

" 'What? . . . What? . . . What? . . . say that again!'

"He repeated:

" 'Go ahead, and kill yourself if it will give you any pleasure!'

"She continued, still terribly pale:

" 'You had better not dare me. I will throw myself out of the window.'

"He began to laugh, went to the window, opened it, and bowing, like a person who does not wish to pass first, he said:

" 'Here is the way. After you!'

"She looked at him for a minute with a terrible wild look; then, gathering speed as if to jump a fence in the field, she rushed past me, past him, over the railing and out of sight. . . .

"I never shall forget the effect this open window produced on me, after seeing it traversed by the body that was falling; for a second it seemed to me to be as large as the sky and as empty as space. Instinctively I fell back, not daring to look, as if I were about to fall myself.

"Jean, dazed, stood motionless.

"The poor girl was brought back with both legs broken. She never will walk again.

"Her lover, crazed by remorse, and perhaps also moved by gratitude, took her back and married her.

"There is the story."

Night was approaching. The young woman, feeling cool, wished to go; and the servant began to roll the cripple's chair toward the village. The artist walked beside his wife. Neither of them had spoken a word for an hour.

THE LETTERS

THE woman had died painlessly, quietly, as a woman should whose life has been blameless. Now she was resting in her bed, lying on her back, her eyes closed, her features calm, her long white hair carefully arranged as if she had arranged it ten minutes before dying; the whole pale countenance of the dead woman was so collected, so calm, so resigned, that one could feel what a sweet soul had lived in that body, what a quiet existence this old soul had led, how easy and pure the death of this ancestor had been.

Kneeling beside the bed, her son, a magistrate with inflexible principles, and her daughter, Marguerite, known as Sister Eulalie, were weeping as if their hearts would break. From their childhood the mother had armed them with a strict moral code, teaching them religion without weakness and duty without compromise. He, the man, had become a judge, and handled the law as a weapon with which he smote the weak ones without pity. She, the girl, influenced by the virtue which had

bathed her in this austere family, had become the bride of Heaven through her loathing for man.

They had hardly known their father, knowing only that he had made their mother unhappy, without being told any of the details.

The nun was wildly kissing the dead woman's hand, an ivory hand as white as the large figure of Christ lying across the bed. On the other side of the long body, the other hand seemed still to be clutching the sheet in the death grasp; and the sheet had preserved the little creases as a memory of those last movements that precede eternal immobility.

A few light taps on the door caused the two mourners to look up, and the priest, who had just come from dinner, returned. He was red and out of breath from his interrupted digestion, for he had made himself a strong mixture of coffee and brandy in order to combat the fatigue of the last few nights and of the wake.

He looked sad, with that assumed sadness of the priest for whom death is a bread-winner. He crossed himself, and approaching with his professional gesture: "Well, my poor children! I have come to help you pass these last sad hours." But Sister Eulalie rose suddenly. "Thank you, father, but my brother and I prefer to remain alone with her. This is our last chance to see her, and we wish to be together, all three of us, as we—we—used to be when we were small and our poor mo—mother ——" Grief stopped her; she could not continue.

Once more serene, the priest bowed, thinking of his bed. "As you wish, my children." He kneeled, crossed himself, prayed, arose, and went out quietly, murmuring: "She was a saint!"

They remained alone, the dead woman and her children. The ticking of the clock, hidden in the shadow, could be heard distinctly, and through the open window drifted in with the soft moonlight the sweet smell of hay and of woods. No other noise could be heard except the occasional croaking of a frog or the chirping of some belated insect. An infinite peace, a divine melancholy, a silent serenity surrounded this dead woman, seeming to emanate from her and to appease nature itself.

Then the judge, still kneeling, his head buried in the bedclothes, cried in a voice altered by grief and stifled by the sheets and blankets: "Mamma, mamma, mamma!" And his sister, frantically striking her forehead against the woodwork, convulsed, twitching and trembling as in an epileptic fit, moaned: "Jesus, Jesus, mamma, Jesus!" And both, shaken by a storm of grief, sobbed and choked.

The crisis slowly calmed down and they wept quietly, as when a calm spell follows a squall on the sea.

Some time passed, and they arose and looked at their dear dead. And memories, those distant memories, yesterday so dear, today so torturing, came to their minds with all the little forgotten details, those

little intimate familiar details that bring back to life the one who has gone. They recalled to each other circumstances, words, smiles, intonations of the mother who was no longer to speak to them. They saw her again happy and calm; they remembered things she had said, and a little motion of her hand, as if beating time, which she often used when emphasizing her words.

They loved her as they never had loved her before. They measured the depth of their grief, and thus discovered how lonely they would find themselves.

It was their prop, their guide, their whole youth, all the best part of their lives that was disappearing; it was their bond with life, their mother, their mamma, the connecting link with their forefathers, which they would thenceforth miss. They now became solitary, lonely beings; they could no longer look back.

The nun said to her brother: "You remember how mamma used often to read over her old letters; they are all in that drawer. Let us, in turn, read them, let us live her whole life tonight beside her! It would be like a road to the cross, like making the acquaintance of her mother, of our grandparents, whom we never knew, but whose letters are there and of whom she so often spoke, do you remember?"

From the drawer they took about ten little packages of yellow paper, tied with care and arranged

one beside another. They laid these relics on the bed and chose one of them on which the word "Father" was written; they opened and read it.

It was one of those old-fashioned letters that one finds in old family desks, those epistles that smell of another century. The first began: "My dear," another one: "My beautiful little girl," others: "My dear child," or: "My dear daughter." And suddenly the nun began to read aloud, to read over to the dead woman her whole history, all her tender memories. The judge, resting his elbow on the bed, listened with his eyes fixed on his mother. The motionless body seemed happy.

Sister Eulalie, interrupting herself, said suddenly: "These should be put in the grave with her; they ought to be used as a shroud and she should be buried in it." She took another package, on which no revealing name was written. She began to read in a firm voice: "My adored one, I love you wildly. Since yesterday I have been suffering the tortures of the damned, haunted by your memory. I feel your lips against mine, your eyes in mine, your breast against mine. I love you, I love you! You have driven me mad. My arms open, I gasp, moved by a wild desire to have you again. My soul and body cry out for you, want you. I have kept on my lips the taste of your kisses. . . ."

The judge straightened himself; the nun stopped reading; he snatched the letter from her hand and

looked for the signature. There was none, but only under the words: "The man who adores you," the name "Henri." Their father's name was René! Therefore this was not from him. The son then quickly rummaged through the package of letters, took one out and read: "I can no longer live without your caresses. . . ." Standing, severe as when sitting on the bench, he looked unmoved at the dead woman. The nun, straight as a statue, with tears in the corners of her eyes, watched her brother, waiting. He crossed the room slowly, went to the window and with his looks lost in the darkness without, he stood still.

When he turned around, Sister Eulalie, her eyes dry now, was still standing near the bed, her head hanging.

He stepped forward, gathered up the letters quickly, and threw them pell-mell back into the drawer; then he closed the curtains of the bed.

When daylight made the candles on the table turn pale, the son left his armchair, and without looking again at the mother upon whom he had passed sentence, severing the tie that united her to son and daughter, he said slowly: "Let us now retire, sister."

CEMETERY SIRENS

FIVE friends, middle-aged men of the world, had finished dinner; all were rich, three of them were married, the other two bachelors. They met thus every month, in memory of their youth, and, after dinner, they chatted away until early morning. Friends since early youth, they enjoyed being together, and perhaps these were the pleasantest evenings of their lives.

One of the gayest was Joseph de Bardon, a bachelor who lived and enjoyed Parisian life to its fullest. He was neither a reveler nor a degenerate, but he was curious and still enjoyed the vigor of youth, for he had not yet reached two-score years. A man of the world in the broadest and best sense of the word, endowed with great wit without much depth, possessing a varied knowledge without serious insight, he drew from his observations, from his adventures, from everything he saw, met, and found, comic and philosophic anecdotes and witty remarks which gave him throughout the town a reputation for unusual intelligence.

He was the orator of the evening. At every meeting he had his story, on which the others

counted. He began to tell it without even being asked.

Smoking, his elbows resting on the table, half a glass of brandy setting before his plate, in the smoky atmosphere filled with the aroma of coffee, he seemed completely at ease, as some beings seem absolutely at home in certain places and at certain times, as, for instance, a nun in a chapel, or a gold-fish in a bowl of water.

Slowly exhaling the fragrant smoke of his after-dinner cigar, he said:

"A rather peculiar adventure happened to me a short time ago."

In one voice, they all exclaimed: "Tell us about it."

"With pleasure. You know that I have a habit of walking around Paris, like book collectors in search of rare editions. I take notice of what occurs, of the people, of all who pass, and of everything that happens.

"Well, one afternoon, toward the middle of September, when the weather was at its best, I left home, without caring in which direction I went. We often feel a vague desire to call on some pretty woman. We run over our mental index of acquaintances, weigh the interest and charm with which they inspire us, and decide according to the favorite of the day. But when the sun is beautiful and the air is warm, we often lose all desire for visits.

"The sun was bright and the air was warm; I lighted a cigar and strolled aimlessly in the direction of the Outer Boulevard. As I walked along, the idea came to me to go to the Montmartre Cemetery.

"I like cemeteries; they rest me and make me sad. And then, there are so many good friends there, whom we shall never see again; I go there from time to time.

"It happens that in this Montmartre Cemetery I have a sweetheart, a charming little woman whom I really loved and the memory of whom makes me sad and gives me regrets—regrets of every kind. I go and dream over her last resting-place —all is over for her.

"Again, I like cemeteries because they are enormous cities with a great population. Only think of the number of bodies that lie in this little enclosure, of the generations of Parisians who will stay there forever, closed up in their little vaults, or buried under the earth with a stone placed at their heads to identify their last home, while the living ones take up so much room and make so much noise.

"In the cemeteries, too, there are monuments almost as interesting as those to be found in museums. Although it cannot be compared to it, the tomb of Cavaignac reminded me, I must admit, of that masterpiece of Jean Goujon: the body of Louis de Brézé, in the underground chapel of the Cathedral of Rouen; all so called modern and real-

istic art has come from there, gentlemen. The dead Louis de Brézé is more real, more terrible, more convulsed by agony than all the statuary put on modern tombs.

"But in the cemetery of Montmartre one can still admire the monument of Baudin, which has a certain amount of grandeur, that of Gautier, that of Mürger, where, the other day, I saw one solitary wreath, put there by whom? By his last sweetheart, now old and perhaps a janitress in the neighborhood? It is a pretty little statue by Millet, but neglect and dirt are spoiling it. Sing of Youth, oh, Mürger!

"I entered the cemetery of Montmartre, and was overcome by a grief which was not very disagreeable, the kind which, when you feel well, makes you think: 'This place is none too gay, but, thank heaven, my time has not yet come!'

"The impression of autumn, of that moist warmth, which smells of dead leaves, and the weak, tired, lifeless sun enhanced the poetry of the sensation of solitude which hangs over this last resting-place of man.

"I sauntered slowly through these streets of tombs, where neighbors do not gossip, do not quarrel, and do not read the papers. I began to read the epitaphs. Really, that's the most amusing thing in the world. Never could Labiche or Meilhac make me laugh as does the comical prose on the tombstones. For random reading, those marble

slabs and those crosses, where relatives of the dead have poured out their grief, their wishes for the future happiness of the deceased and their hopes to join them, are superior to anything by De Kock.

"But the spot I love in this cemetery is the abandoned section, solitary, full of large yew and cypress trees, the old quarter of ancient dead which will soon become a new quarter, whose great green trees, nourished by human bodies, will be cut down in order to lay out new corpses under little marble slabs.

"After I had wandered around there for a while, I felt that it was dull and that I would have to bring to the last resting-place of my little friend my sincere tribute to her memory. On arriving near her, I felt quite sad. Poor darling, she was so gentle, so loving, so white and fresh—and now—if that place were to be opened——

"Bending over the iron railing, I whispered my regrets to her, which she doubtless did not hear, and I was about to leave when I saw a woman dressed in deep mourning, kneeling at the neighboring plot. Her crape veil had been lifted and showed a pretty blond head, whose golden tresses under the dark headgear seemed tinged with the first light of dawn. I stood there.

"Suddenly she seemed to be suffering from a deep grief. She had buried her face in her hands, and, as rigid as a statue, lost in her regrets, telling over her rosary, she seemed herself a dead woman

thinking of the deceased. Then I guessed that she was about to weep—I guessed it by a little movement of her back like a shiver. At first she wept silently, then stronger and stronger, with a quick twitching of neck and shoulders. Suddenly she uncovered her eyes. They were full of tears and charming, wild eyes which looked around as if awakening from a nightmare. She saw me looking at her, seemed ashamed, and once more hid her face in her hands. Then her sobs became convulsive, and her head slowly drooped toward the marble. She leaned her forehead against it, and the folds of her veil, spreading around her, covered the white angles of the beloved monument like a new wreath of mourning. I heard her moan, then she sank down, her cheek against the slab, and remained motionless, unconscious.

"Instinctively I started toward her, I slapped the palms of her hands, blew on her eyes, and, at the same time, read this simple epitaph: 'Here lies Louis Théodore Carrel, captain of marines, killed by the enemy in Tonkin. Pray for him.'

"This death was only a few months old. I was moved to tears, and I redoubled my attentions. They were successful; she regained consciousness. I seemed very sad. I understood from her first look that she would be polite and grateful. She was; and with more tears, her story came out by fragments: the death of the officer in Tonkin at the end of a year of married life, after a love match,

for, having neither father nor mother, she had only the regulation dowry.

"I consoled and comforted her, and raised her to her feet. Then I said:

" 'Do not stay here. Come.'

"She murmured:

" 'I feel unable to walk.'

" 'I will support you.'

" 'Thank you, sir, you are very kind. Were you also mourning for a deceased one?'

" 'Yes, Madame.'

" 'A woman?'

" 'Yes, Madame.'

" 'Your wife?'

" 'A friend.'

" 'One can love a friend as much as a wife. Passion knows no law.'

" 'Yes, Madame.'

"She took my arm, and we set off together. I almost carried her through the paths of the cemetery. When we were outside, she murmured in a weak voice:

" 'I am feeling very faint.'

" 'Would you like to go somewhere and take something?'

" 'Yes, Monsieur.'

"I noticed a restaurant, one of those places where the friends of the dead go to recuperate from their exertions. We entered. I ordered for her a cup of hot tea, which seemed to revive her. A vague smile appeared on her lips. She spoke to

me of herself. It was so sad, so lonely being all alone at home, day and night, having no one to love or confide in, no intimacy with anyone.

"She looked sincere. The words sounded so sweet from her lips. I grew tender. She was very young, perhaps twenty. I paid her some compliments, which she accepted very well. Then, as time was passing, I offered to take her home in a carriage. She accepted; and in the carriage we sat so close to each other, shoulder to shoulder, that the warmth of our bodies mingled through our clothes, which is one of the most distracting things in the world.

"When the carriage had stopped at her house, she murmured: 'I really feel unable to go upstairs alone, for I live on the fourth floor. You have already been so kind, would you mind giving me your arm up to my apartment?'

"I hastened to comply. She went up slowly, breathing with difficulty. Then, at her door, she added:

" 'Wouldn't you like to step inside for a minute, in order that I may thank you?'

"Of course I accepted this invitation.

"The apartment was very modest, even a little poor, but simply and tastefully arranged.

"We sat down side by side on a little sofa, and once more she spoke to me of her loneliness.

"She rang for the servant, in order to offer me something to drink. The girl did not come. I was

delighted, hoping that this maid might be one of those women who only come in the morning to clear up and then depart.

"She had taken off her hat. She was really charming with her bright eyes fastened on me, so charming that I had a terrible temptation, and I yielded to it. I seized her in my arms, and on her eyes, which suddenly closed, I rained kisses—kisses—kisses.

"She resisted, pushing me away, repeating:

" 'Stop—stop—end it!'

"What could she mean by this word? In such cases 'end' may have at least two meanings. In order to quiet her, I passed from her eyes to her lips, and I imparted to the word 'end' the meaning I preferred. She did not resist too much, and when we once more looked at each other, after this outrage to the memory of the captain killed in Tonkin, she had a languishing, tender, resigned look which dispelled all my fears.

"Then I was gallant, eager, and grateful. After another conversation, which lasted about an hour, I asked:

" 'Where do you dine?'

" 'In a little restaurant in the neighborhood.'

" 'All alone?'

" 'Yes, of course.'

" 'Will you dine with me?'

" 'Where?'

" 'In a good restaurant on the Boulevard.'

"She resisted a little. I insisted. She gave in, calming herself with the following argument: 'I am so terribly, terribly lonely;' then she added: 'But I must put on a less gloomy dress.'

"She went into her bedroom.

"When she came out again, she was wearing a delightful gray, a second-mourning costume, neat and simple. She evidently had cemetery gowns and street gowns.

"The dinner was very pleasant. She drank champagne, grew bright and lively, and I went home with her.

"This friendship begun on the graves, lasted about three weeks. But one tires of everything and especially of women. I left her on the pretext of an indispensable journey. I was very generous at my departure, and she thanked me warmly. She made me promise, swear, to come back after my return, for she seemed really to care for me.

"I went in search of new love, and about a month went by without my feeling any desire to visit this little cemetery sweetheart. However, I did not forget her. Her memory haunted me like a mystery, like a psychological problem, like one of those inexplicable questions the solution of which worries us.

"I don't know why, but one day I imagined that I might see her in the Montmartre Cemetery, and I went there.

"For a long time I walked around without meet-

ing any others than the ordinary visitors, those who have not yet severed all bonds with their dead.

"But as I wandered away in another section of this great city of the dead, I noticed suddenly, at the end of a narrow walk, a couple in deep mourning approaching in my direction. Oh, astonishment! When they had come up to me, I recognized the woman. It was she!

"She saw me, blushed, and, as I passed beside her, she gave me an imperceptible wink which seemed to mean: 'Do not recognize me,' but which also meant: 'Come back to see me, darling.'

"The man was distinguished-looking, an officer of the Legion of Honor, about fifty years of age.

"He was supporting her as I myself had done, under similar conditions.

"I left, bewildered, wondering at what I had seen. To what race might this sepulchral huntress belong? Was she an ordinary common girl who went to pluck from the graves sad men, haunted by the memories of their wives or sweethearts, and still agitated by the remembrance of vanished caresses? Was she alone? Are there many like her? Is it a profession? Do they walk the cemetery the same as they do the streets? Cemetery sirens! Or had she alone had this admirable idea, from a deep philosophy, of taking advantage of the regrets of love which these funereal places inspire?

"I would have given much to know whose widow she was that day!"

THE DYING PEASANT

THE glowing sun of autumn was pouring its rays down on the farmyard. Under the grass, which had been cropped close by the cows, the earth, soaked by recent rain, was soft, and sank under the feet with a soggy sound, and the trees, laden with fruit, were dropping pale green apples in the dark green grass.

Four young heifers, tethered in a row, were grazing, and at times looking toward the house and lowing. The fowls made a spot of color on the dung-heap before the stable, scratching, moving around, and cackling, while two cocks crowed continually, digging worms for their hens, which they called with a loud clucking.

The wooden gate opened and a man entered. He might have been forty years old, but he looked at least sixty, wrinkled, bent, walking slowly, impeded by the weight of heavy wooden shoes, full of straw. His long arms hung limply from his body. When he was near the farm, a little yellow pug dog, tied to the foot of an enormous pear-tree,

beside a barrel which served as his kennel, began to wag his tail and bark for joy. The man cried:

"Down, Finot!"

The dog was quiet.

A peasant woman came out of the house. Her large, flat, bony body was outlined under a long jacket which was tied in at the waist. A gray skirt, too short, fell to the middle of her calves, which were covered with blue stockings. She, too, wore wooden shoes, full of straw. The white cap, turned yellow, covered a few hairs plastered to the scalp, and her brown, thin, ugly, toothless face had that brutal and savage expression often found on the faces of peasants.

"How is he getting along?" inquired the man.

"The priest said it's the end—that he will not live through the night."

Both entered the house.

After passing through the kitchen, they went into a low, dark room, barely lighted by one window, in front of which a rag was hanging. The heavy beams, turned brown with time and smoke, crossed the room from one side to the other, supporting the thin floor of the garret where an army of rats raced about day and night.

The damp, lumpy, earth floor looked greasy, and, at the back of the room, the bed made an indistinct white spot. A harsh, regular noise, a difficult, hoarse, wheezing breathing, like the gurgling of water from a broken pump, came from the dark-

ened bed where an old man, the father of the woman, lay dying.

The man and the woman approached the dying man and looked at him with calm, resigned eyes.

The son-in-law said:

"I think it's all over with him this time; he will not live through the night."

The woman answered:

"He's been breathing like that ever since midday."

They kept silent. The father's eyes were closed, his face was the color of the earth, and so dry that it looked like wood. Through his open mouth came his harsh, rattling breath; and the gray canvas sheet rose and fell with each respiration.

The son-in-law, after a long silence, said:

"There's nothing more to do; I can't help him. It's a bother, too, because the weather is good and we have much work to do."

His wife seemed annoyed at this. She thought for a short time, and then declared:

"He won't be buried till Saturday, and that will give you all day to-morrow."

The peasant thought the matter over and answered:

"Yes, but to-morrow I must invite the people to the funeral. That means five or six hours to go to Tourville and Manetot, and to see everybody."

After meditating, the woman declared:

"It isn't three o'clock yet; you could go out

toward Tourville and begin. You can just as well say that he's dead, seeing as he is almost gone now."

The man stood perplexed for a while, weighing the pros and cons of the idea. At last he declared:

"I will do that."

"He set off, but came back after a minute's hesitation:

"As you haven't anything to do, you might cut up some apples, and make four dozen dumplings to entertain those who come to the funeral. You can light the fire with the wood that's under the shed. It's dry."

He left the room, returned to the kitchen, opened the cupboard, took out a six-pound loaf of bread, cut off a slice, and carefully gathered the crumbs in the palm of his hand and threw them into his mouth, so as not to lose anything. Then, with the end of his knife, he scraped out a little salt butter from the bottom of an earthen jar, spread it on his bread and began to eat slowly, as he did everything.

He recrossed the farmyard, quieted the dog, which had begun to bark again, went out on the road bordered by a ditch, and disappeared in the direction of Tourville.

As soon as she was alone, the woman began to work. She got the meal-trough, and prepared the dough for the dumplings. She kneaded it for a long time, turning it over and over again, punching, pressing, crushing it. Finally she made a big,

round, yellow-white ball, which she placed on the corner of the table.

Then she went to get her apples, and, in order not to injure the tree with a pole, she climbed up by means of a ladder. She chose the fruit carefully, taking only the ripe apples, and gathering them in her apron.

A voice called from the road:

"Hey! Madame Chicot!"

She turned around. It was a neighbor, Osime Faver, the mayor, who was on his way to fertilize his fields, seated on the dung-wagon, with his feet hanging over the side. She turned around and answered:

"What can I do for you, Maître Osime?"

"How is the father?"

"He is as good as dead," she cried. "The funeral is Saturday at seven, because there is so much work to be done."

"So! Good luck to you! Take care of yourself," the neighbor answered.

To his kind remarks she answered: "Thanks; the same to you."

And she continued picking her apples.

When she returned to the house, she went to look at her father, expecting to find him dead. But as soon as she reached the door she heard the monotonous, noisy rattle, and, thinking it needless to go to him, not to lose any time she began to prepare her dumplings. She wrapped up the apples, one by

one, in a thin layer of paste, then she laid them in a row on the edge of the table. When she had made forty-eight balls, arranged by dozens, one in front of another, she began to think of preparing supper, and she hung her kettle over the fire to cook potatoes; for she judged it useless to heat the oven that day; as she had all the next day in which to finish her preparations.

Her husband returned about five o'clock. As soon as he had crossed the threshold, he asked:

"Is it over?"

"Not yet; he's still gurgling," she answered.

They went to look at him. The old man was in exactly the same condition. His harsh breathing, as regular as the ticking of the clock, was neither quicker nor slower. It returned every second, the key varying a little, as the air entered or left his lungs.

His son-in-law looked at him and said:

"He'll pass away without our noticing it, like a candle going out."

They returned to the kitchen and began to eat, without saying a word. When they had swallowed their soup, they ate more bread and butter; then, as soon as the dishes were washed, they returned to the dying man.

The woman carrying a little lamp with a smoky wick, held it in front of her father's face. If he had not been breathing, one would certainly have thought him dead.

The bed of the married pair was hidden in a little recess at the other end of the room. Silent, they went to bed, put out the light, closed their eyes; and soon two unequal snores, one deep and the other shriller, accompanied the uninterrupted rattle of the dying man.

The rats ran wildly about the garret.

The husband awoke at the first streaks of dawn. His father-in-law was still alive. He shook his wife, worried by the tenacity of the old man.

"Phémie, he doesn't mean to die. What would you do?"

He knew that she gave good advice.

"You needn't be afraid," she answered; "he can't live through the day. And the mayor won't stop our burying him tomorrow, because he allowed it for Maître Remard's father, who died just during the plowing season."

He was convinced by this argument, and departed for the fields.

His wife baked the dumplings, and then attended to her housework.

At noon the old man was not yet dead. The people hired for the day's work came by groups to look at him. Each one had his say, then they left again for the fields.

At six o'clock, when work was over, the father was still breathing. At last his son-in-law was frightened.

"What would you do now, Phémie?"

She no longer knew how to solve the problem. They went to the mayor. He promised that he would close his eyes, and authorize the funeral for the following day. They also went to the health officer, who likewise promised, in order to oblige Maître Chicot, to antedate the death certificate. The man and the woman returned, feeling more at ease.

They went to bed and to sleep, as they did the night before, their healthy breathing mingling with the feeble breath of the old man.

When they awoke, he was not yet dead.

Then they were really alarmed. They stood by their father, watching him with distrust, as if he wished to play them a mean trick, to deceive them, to annoy them on purpose, and they were vexed at him for the time which he was making them lose.

"What am I going to do?" the son-in-law asked.

She did not know, so she answered: "It certainly is vexing!"

The guests who were expected could not be warned away. They decided to wait, and explain the case to them.

Toward a quarter before seven, the first persons arrived. The women in black, their heads covered with large veils, looked very sad. The men, ill at ease in their homespun coats, came forward more slowly, in couples, talking business.

Maître Chicot and his wife, bewildered, received them in despair; and suddenly, both began to cry as they approached the first group. They explained

the matter, related their difficulty, offered chairs, bustled around, tried to make excuses, attempting to prove that everybody would have done as they had, talking continually and giving nobody a chance to answer.

They went from one person to another saying: "I never would have thought it; it's incredible how he can last this long!"

The guests, taken aback, a little disappointed, as if they had missed an expected entertainment, did not know what to do, some remaining seated, others standing. Several wished to leave. Maître Chicot held them back:

"You must eat something, anyhow! We made some dumplings and we might as well make use of them."

The faces brightened at this idea. The yard was filling little by little; the early arrivals were telling the news to those who had arrived later. Everybody was whispering. The idea of the dumplings seemed to cheer everyone.

The women went in to take a look at the dying man. They crossed themselves near the bed, muttered a prayer and came out again. The men, less anxious for this spectacle, cast a look through the window, which had been left open.

Madame Chicot explained her distress:

"That's how he's been for two days, neither better nor worse. Doesn't he sound like a pump without any water?"

When everybody had had a look at the dying man, they thought of the refreshments; but as there were too many people for the kitchen to hold, the table was moved out in front of the door. The four dozen golden dumplings, tempting and appetizing, arranged in two large dishes, attracted all eyes. Each person reached out to take one, fearing there would not be enough. But four were left.

Maître Chicot, with full mouth, said:

"Father would feel sad if he were to see these. He loved dumplings so much when he was alive."

A big, jovial peasant declared:

"He won't eat any more now. Each one in his turn."

This remark, instead of making the guests sad, seemed to enliven them. It was their turn at present to eat dumplings.

Madame Chicot, distressed at the expense, kept running down to the cellar, all the time, after cider. The pitchers followed one another in quick succession. The company was laughing and talking loud now; they were beginning to shout as they do during meals.

Suddenly an old peasant woman who had stayed near the dying man, held there by a morbid fear of that which would soon happen to her, appeared at the window and cried in a shrill voice:

"He's dead! he's dead!"

Everybody was silent. The women arose quickly to see.

He was indeed dead. The rattle had ceased. The men looked at each other, ill at ease. They hadn't finished eating the dumplings. Certainly the rascal had not chosen a propitious moment.

The Chicots were no longer weeping. It was over; they were relieved. They kept repeating:

"I knew it couldn't last. If he could only have done it last night, it would have saved us all this trouble."

But it was all over. They would bury him on Monday, that was all, and they would eat some more dumplings for the occasion.

The guests went away, talking the matter over, pleased at having had the chance to see everything and getting something to eat.

And when the man and the woman were alone, face to face, she said, her face contracted with anguish:

"We'll have to bake four dozen more dumplings! Why couldn't he have made up his mind last night?"

The husband, more resigned, answered:

"Well, we shall not have to do this every day."

A MADMAN'S JOURNAL

HE was dead—the head of a high tribunal, the upright magistrate, whose irreproachable life was a proverb in all the courts of France. Advocates, young counsellors, judges had saluted at sight of his large, thin, pale face and sparkling deep-set eyes, bowing low in token of respect.

He had passed his life in pursuing crime and in protecting the weak. Swindlers and murderers had no more redoubtable enemy, for he seemed to read their most secret thoughts.

He was dead, now, at the age of eighty-two, honored by the homage and followed by the regrets of a whole people. Soldiers in red trousers had escorted him to the tomb, and men in white cravats had spoken words and shed tears that were apparently sincere beside his grave.

But here is the strange paper found by this dismayed notary in the desk where he had kept the records of great criminals! It was entitled: "Why?"

June 20, 1851. I have just left court. I have condemned Blondel to death! Why did this man kill his five children? Frequently one meets with people to whom destruction of life is a pleasure. Yes, it should be a pleasure, the greatest of all, perhaps, for is not killing the next thing to creating? To make and to destroy! These words contain the history of the universe, all the history of worlds, all that is, all! Why is it not intoxicating to kill?

June 25. To think that a being is there who lives, who walks, who runs. A being? What is a being? The animated thing that bears in itself the principle of motion, and a will ruling that motion. It is attached to nothing, this thing. Its feet do not belong to the ground. It is a grain of life that moves on the earth, and this grain of life, coming I know not whence, one can destroy at will. Then —nothing more. It perishes, it is finished.

June 26. Why, then, is it a crime to kill? Yes, why? On the contrary, it is the law of nature. The mission of every being is to kill; he kills to live, and he lives to kill. The beast kills without ceasing, all day, every instant of his existence. Man kills without ceasing, to nourish himself; but since he needs also to kill for pleasure, he has invented hunting. The child kills the insects he finds, the little birds, all the little animals that come in his way. But this does not suffice for our irresistible need to massacre. It is not enough to kill beasts;

we must kill man, too. Long ago this need was satisfied by human sacrifices. Now the necessity of social life has made murder a crime. We condemn and punish the assassin. But, as we cannot live without yielding to this natural and imperious instinct, we relieve ourselves, from time to time, by wars. Then a whole nation slaughters another nation. It is a feast of blood, a feast that maddens armies, and intoxicates civilians, women and children, who read by lamplight, the feverish story of massacre.

One might suppose that those destined to accomplish these butcheries of men would be despised! No, they are loaded with honors. They are clad in gold and in resplendent garments; they wear plumes on their heads and ornaments on their breasts; and to them are given crosses, rewards, titles of every kind. They are proud, respected, loved by women, cheered by the crowd, solely because their mission is to shed human blood! They drag through the streets their instruments of death, and the passer-by clad in black, looks on with envy. For to kill is the great law set by nature in the heart of existence! There is nothing more beautiful and honorable than killing.

June 30. To kill is the law, because nature loves eternal youth. She seems to cry in all her unconscious acts: "Quick! quick! quick!" The more she destroys, the more she renews herself.

July 2. A human being—what is a human be-

ing? Through thought it is a reflection of all that is; through memory and science it is an abridged edition of the universe, whose history it represents; each human being becomes a microcosm in the macrocosm.

July 3. It must be a pleasure, unique and full of zest, to kill; to have there before one the living, thinking being; to make therein a little hope, nothing but a little hole, to see that red thing flow which is the blood, which makes life; and to have before one only a heap of limp flesh, cold, inert, void of thought.

Aug. 5. I, who have passed my life in judging, condemning, killing by the spoken word, killing by the guillotine those who had killed by the knife, I, if I should do as all the assassins have done, whom I have smitten, I—who would know it?

Aug. 10. Who would ever know? Who would ever suspect me, me, me, especially if I should choose a being I had no interest in doing away with?

Aug. 15. The temptation has come. It pervades my whole being; my hands tremble with a desire to kill.

Aug. 22. I could resist no longer. I killed a little creature as an experiment, for a beginning. Jean, my servant, had a goldfinch in a cage hung in the office window. I sent him on an errand, and I took the little bird in my hand. I felt its heart beat. It was warm. I went up to my room. From

time to time I squeezed it tighter; its heart beat faster; this was atrocious and delicious. I was near choking it. But I could not see the blood.

Then I took scissors, short nail-scissors, and I cut its throat with three slits, quite gently. It opened its bill, it struggled to escape me, but I held it, oh! I held it—I could have held a mad dog—and I saw the blood trickle.

And then I did as assassins do—real ones. I washed the scissors, I washed my hands, I sprinkled water, and took the body, the corpse, to the garden to hide it. I buried it under a strawberry-plant. It never will be found. Every day I shall eat a strawberry from that plant. How one can enjoy life, when one knows how!

My servant cried; he thought his bird had flown. How could he suspect me?

Aug. 25. I must kill a man! I must!

Aug. 30. It is done. But what a little thing! I had gone for a walk in the forest of Vernes. I was thinking of nothing, literally nothing. A child was in the road, a little child eating a slice of bread and butter.

He stops to see me pass and says, "Good-day, Monsieur President."

And the thought enters my head: "Shall I kill him?"

I answer: "You are alone, my boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"All alone in the wood?"

"Yes, sir."

The wish to kill him intoxicated me like wine. I approached him quite softly, persuaded that he was going to run away. And, suddenly, I seized him by the throat. He looked at me with terror in his eyes—such eyes! He held my wrists in his little hands, and his body writhed like a feather over the fire. Then he moved no more. I threw the body in the ditch, and some weeds on top of it. I returned home, and dined well. What a little thing it was! In the evening I was very gay, light, rejuvenated; I passed the evening at the Prefect's. They found me witty. But I have not seen blood! I am tranquil.

Aug. 31. The body has been discovered. They are hunting for the assassin.

Sept. 1. Two tramps have been arrested. Proofs are lacking.

Sept. 2. The parents have been to see me. They wept! Ah! ah!

Oct. 6. Nothing has been discovered. Some strolling vagabond must have done the deed. Ah! ah! If I had seen the blood flow, it seems to me I should be tranquil now! The desire to kill is in my blood; it is like the passion of youth at twenty.

Oct. 20. Yet another. I was walking by the river, after breakfast. And I saw under a willow a fisherman asleep. It was noon. A spade was standing in a potato-field near by, as if expressly for me. I took it. I returned; I raised it like a

club, and with one blow of the edge I cleft the fisherman's head. Oh! he bled, this one! Rose-colored blood. It flowed into the water, quite gently. And I went away with a slow step. If I had been seen! Ah! ah! I should have made an excellent assassin.

Oct. 25. The affair of the fisherman makes a great stir. His nephew, who fished with him is, charged with the murder.

Oct. 26. The examining magistrate affirms that the nephew is guilty. Everybody in town believes it. Ah! ah!

Oct. 27. The nephew makes a very poor witness. He had gone to the village to buy bread and cheese, he declared. He swore that his uncle had been killed in his absence. Who would believe him?

Oct. 28. The nephew has all but confessed, they have badgered him so. Ah! ah! Justice!

Nov. 15. There are overwhelming proofs against the nephew, who was his uncle's heir. I shall preside at the sessions.

Jan. 25. To death! to death! to death! I have had him condemned to death! Ah! ah! The advocate-general spoke like an angel! Ah! ah! Yet another! I shall go to see him executed!

Mar. 10. It is done. They guillotined him this morning. He died very well! very well! That gave me pleasure! How fine it is to see a man's head cut off!

Now, I shall wait, I can wait. It would take such a little thing to let myself be caught.

The manuscript contained other pages, but without relating any new crime.

Alienist physicians to whom the awful story has been submitted declare that there are in the world many undiscovered madmen, as adroit and as much to be feared as this monstrous lunatic.

CHECKMATE!

I WAS going to Turin by way of Corsica. At Nice I took the boat for Bastia, and as soon as we were started I noticed a rather pretty, modest-looking young woman seated on the deck. She was looking into the distance with a far-away expression.

I seated myself opposite and looked at her, asking myself the questions which come to one's mind on seeing an unknown woman who interests him: What was her condition, her age, her disposition? Then through what you see you guess what you do not know. You notice the length of the waist when she is seated, you try to discover her ankle, you observe the quality of the hand, which reveals the refinement of all one's affections, and the ear, which indicates origin better than a birth certificate. You try to hear her speak in order to understand the nature of her mind and the tendencies of her heart through her intonations. For the quality of the voice and the choice of words unfold to an experienced observer the whole mysterious texture of the soul.

I was therefore attentively observing my neighbor, looking for signs, analyzing gestures, expecting a revelation every minute.

She opened a little bag and drew out a newspaper. I rubbed my hands: "Tell me what you read, and I will tell you what you think."

She began to read with a look of pleasure. The sheet was *Echo de Paris*. I was perplexed. She was reading an article by Scholl. Was she a Schollist? She began to smile. Was she one of his opponents? It was difficult to make her out.

I sat down beside her and began to read, with no less attention, a volume of poetry that I had bought, the "Song of Love," by Félix Frank.

I noticed that she took in the title with a rapid glance, just as a flying bird snatches up a fly. Several of the passengers passed by in order to look at her. But she seemed only to be thinking of her article. When she had finished it, she laid the paper down between us.

Bowing, I said to her:

"Madame, may I glance at this paper?"

"Certainly, Monsieur."

"In the meanwhile, allow me to offer you this volume of verses."

"Thank you, Monsieur; is it amusing?"

I was a bit disturbed by this question. One does not ask of a volume of verse whether it is amusing.

"It is better than that, it is charming, delicate and very artistic," I answered.

"Then let me see it."

She took the volume, opened it and began to glance through it with a little surprised air which showed that she was not in the habit of reading verse.

At times she seemed moved, at other times she smiled, but with a smile different from the one she had when reading the newspaper.

Suddenly I asked her: "Does it please you?"

"Yes, but I like things that are merry, very merry. I am not at all sentimental."

We began to talk. I learned that she was the wife of a captain of dragoons, stationed at Ajaccio, and that she was going to join her husband there.

In a few minutes I had found out that she did not love him any too much. She loved him, nevertheless, but reservedly, as one loves a man who has not lived up to what was expected before marriage. He had trotted her from garrison to garrison, through many sad little villages. Now he was calling her to this dismal island. No, life was not amusing for everybody. She would even have preferred remaining with her parents in Lyons, for there she knew everybody. But now she had to go to Corsica. Really, the Secretary of War was not at all nice to her husband.

We spoke of the places in which she would have preferred to live, and I asked:

"Do you like Paris?"

She exclaimed:

"Oh! Monsieur, do I love Paris? Is it possible to ask such a question?" And she began to talk to me of Paris with such ardor, such enthusiasm, such envy, that I thought to myself: "That's the string to play on."

She adored Paris from a distance with the exasperated passion of a woman from the country, with the wild impatience of a captive bird that is watching a forest all day from the window where his cage is hung.

She began to question me hurriedly; she wished to learn everything in five minutes. She knew the names of all the well-known people, and of many others of whom I never had heard.

"How is Gounod? and Sardou? Oh! Monsieur, I do so love Sardou's plays! They are so gay and witty! Each time I see one of them I dream of it for a week! I also read one of Daudet's books, which pleased me so much! *Sapho,* do you know it? Is Daudet handsome? Have you seen Daudet? And Zola, what kind of man is he? If you knew how *Germinal* made me cry! Do you remember where the little child dies in the darkness? Isn't it terrible! I was almost sick after reading it! I also read a book by Monsieur Bourget, *Cruelle Enigme.* I have a girl cousin who went so wild about that novel that she wrote to Bourget. I found that book too poetic. I prefer funny things. Do you know Monsieur Grévin? And Monsieur Coquelin? And Monsieur Damala? And Monsieur

Rochefort? They say he is so witty! And Monsieur de Cassagnac? I heard that he has a duel every day!"

After about an hour, this rapid-fire questioning began to slow down; and having satisfied her curiosity to the full extent of my fantastical imagination, I was at liberty to pick my own subjects of conversation.

I told her stories of the gay Parisian life. She took them in with both eyes and ears. She must certainly have conceived a strange idea of the great, well-known ladies of Paris. They were all stories of clandestine appointments, rapid victories and passionate defeats. From time to time she would ask me:

"Oh! is that the way they live?"

I answered with a sly smile:

"Of course, the average middle-class families lead an uneventful, monotonous life, respecting a virtue which no one appreciates."

I began ironically to philosophize about virtue. I talked carelessly of the poor fools who go through life without ever having known the good, sweet things, without ever having tasted the delicious pleasures of stolen kisses, so passionate and fervid, because they have married some stick of a husband whose marital modesty has allowed them to spend their lives in total ignorance of refined sensuousness and delicate sentiment.

Then I began to tell her anecdotes, stories of little

private dinners, of intrigues which I declared were known the world over. The refrain was always the same, it was always discreet, veiled praise of sudden and hidden love, of the sensation stolen like a fruit, while passing by, and forgotten as soon as it is over.

Night came on, calm and warm. The great vessel, trembling under the impulse of its massive machinery, was gliding over the seas, under the star-studded sky.

The little woman was silent. She was breathing slowly and sometimes sighing. Suddenly she arose:

"I am going to bed," she said; "good night, Monsieur."

She shook hands with me.

I knew that she expected to take, the next evening, the coach which goes from Bastia to Ajaccio through the mountains, and which stays over night on the way.

I answered:

"Good night, Madame."

I then went to my cabin.

The next morning early I reserved all three seats in the coach for myself, alone.

At nightfall, as I was climbing into the old wagon which was about to leave Bastia, the driver asked me whether I would be willing to give up a little room to a lady. I asked gruffly:

"To what lady?"

"To an officer's wife who is going to Ajaccio."

"Tell this person that I will willingly give her a seat."

She arrived, having spent the day sleeping, as she said. She excused herself, thanked me and climbed in.

This coach was a kind of hermetically sealed box, getting no light except through its two doors. There we were, face-to-face in the interior. The horses were going at a lively trot; then we got into the mountains. A fresh and penetrating odor of aromatic herbs drifted in through the open windows, that strong smell which Corsica spreads around itself so far that the sailors can recognize it on the sea, so subtle that it is hard to analyze it. I began once more to speak of Paris, and she listened to me again with feverish attention. My stories became bolder and full of those veiled words which stir the blood.

Night had fallen completely. I could no longer see anything, not even the white spot which, a minute ago, the young woman's face made in the darkness. The driver's lantern lighted only the four horses, which were slowly climbing.

From time to time the sound of a mountain torrent, rushing through the rocks, came to us mingled with the noise of the bells on the horses, then it was soon lost in the distance behind us.

Slowly I advanced my foot and met hers, which she did not remove. Then I no longer moved, and suddenly I began to talk of tenderness and of affec-

tion. I had advanced my hand and met hers. She did not remove that either. I kept on talking, nearer to her ear, very close to her mouth. I already felt her heart beating against my breast. It was beating fast and strong—good sign; then, slowly, I placed my lips on her neck, sure that I held her, so sure that I would have staked my life on it.

But suddenly she gave a start, as if she had just waked up, such a start that I flew over to the other side of the carriage. Then, before I had had time to understand, to think of anything, I first received five or six terrible slaps in the face, and then a shower of punches, which came to me hard and heavy, hitting me everywhere, without my being able to ward them off in the dense obscurity which surrounded this struggle.

I stretched out my hands, trying vainly to seize her arms. Then, no longer knowing what to do, I turned around quickly, presenting to her furious attack only my back, and hiding my head in a corner of the cushioned seats.

She seemed to understand, perhaps by the sound of the blows, this ruse of a desperate man, and she stopped hitting me.

After a few minutes she went back to her corner, and for at least an hour kept sobbing as if her heart would break.

I had sat down again, very uneasy and ashamed. I would have liked to talk to her, but what could I say? I could think of nothing! Make excuses?

That would be stupid! What would you have said? Nothing, you may be sure.

She was heaving great sighs now, which affected me and distressed me. I would have liked to console her, to kiss her, as one kisses a sorrowing child, to beg her pardon, to throw myself at her feet, but I did not dare.

Those situations are very annoying.

At last she became calmer, and we remained in our own corners, motionless and speechless, while the carriage kept on, stopping from time to time for new relays. Then we would both quickly close our eyes, so as not to see each other when the bright rays of a stable lantern penetrated our Stygian darkness. Then the coach would start again, and the sweet perfumed air of the Corsican mountains caressing my cheeks and lips intoxicated me like wine.

By Jove! what a wonderful trip it would have been if my companion had not been so foolish.

Slowly daylight began to creep into the carriage, the pale light of early dawn. I looked at my neighbor. She was pretending to sleep. Then the sun, having risen behind the mountains, soon covered with light an immense blue gulf, surrounded by enormous granite-capped peaks.

My neighbor then pretended to awake. She opened her eyes (they were red); she opened her mouth as if to yawn, just as if she had slept for a long time. Then she hesitated, and stammered:

"Shall we soon be there?"

"Yes, Madame, in less than an hour."

She continued, looking out in the distance:

"It's very tiresome to spend the night in a carriage."

"Yes, it makes one quite lame."

"Especially after a trip on the water."

"Oh! yes."

"Is that Ajaccio ahead of us?"

"Yes, Madame."

"I wish we were there."

"I understand that."

The sound of her voice was a little troubled, her manner a little embarrassed, her eye a little shifty. However, she seemed to have forgotten everything.

I admired her. How instinctively artful those little minxes are! What diplomats!

In about an hour we arrived; and a big dragoon, built like a Hercules, standing before the office, waved his handkerchief on discovering the carriage.

My neighbor threw her arms around his neck and kissed him at least twenty times, repeating:

"How are you, dearest? I was so anxious to see you!"

My trunk had been taken from the top of the coach, and I was discreetly retreating when she called me back:

"Oh, Monsieur, are you leaving without saying good-by to me?"

I stammered: "Madame, I was leaving you to your joy."

Then she said to her husband: "Darling, thank Monsieur; he was charming to me throughout the trip. He even offered me a seat in the carriage which he had reserved for himself. It is a pleasure to meet such agreeable companions."

The big dragoon shook my hand, thanking me effusively.

The young woman smiled as she watched us together. I must have looked like a fool!

THE SHEPHERD'S LEAP

HIGH perpendicular cliffs line the sea-front between Dieppe and Havre. In a depression in the cliffs, here and there one sees a little narrow gulch with steep sides covered with short grass and gorse, which descends from the cultivated tableland toward a shingly beach, where it ends in a depression like the bed of a torrent. Nature made those valleys; the rainstorms created the depressions in which they terminate, wearing away what remained of the cliffs, and channeling as far as the sea the bed of the stream.

Sometimes a village is concealed in these gulches, into which the wind rushes straight from the open sea.

I spent a summer in one of these valleys with a peasant, from whose house, facing the waves, I could see a huge triangular sweep of blue water framed by the green slopes of the valley, and lighted up in places by white sails passing in the sunlight.

The road leading toward the sea ran through the farther end of the defile, abruptly passed be-

tween two chalk-cliffs and became a sort of deep gulley before opening on a beautiful carpet of smooth pebbles, rounded and polished by the immemorial caress of the waves.

This steep gorge was called the "Shepherd's Leap." Here is the drama that originated this name.

The story goes that this village was at one time ruled by an austere and violent young priest. He left the seminary filled with hatred toward those who lived according to natural laws and did not follow the laws of his God. Inflexibly severe on himself, he displayed merciless intolerance towards others. One thing above all stirred him with rage and disgust—love. If he had lived in cities in the midst of the civilized and the refined, who conceal the brutal dictates of nature behind delicate veils of sentiment and tenderness, if he had heard the confessions of perfumed sinners in some vast cathedral nave, in which their guilt was softened by the grace of their fall and the idealism surrounding material kisses, perhaps he would not have felt those fierce revolts, those inordinate outbursts of anger, that took possession of him when he witnessed the vulgar misconduct of some rustic pair in a ditch or in a barn.

He likened them to brutes, these people who knew nothing of love and who simply paired like animals; and he hated them for the coarseness of their souls, for the foul way in which they appeased their instincts, for the repulsive merriment

exhibited even by old men when they happened to talk about these unclean pleasures.

Perhaps, too, he was tortured, in spite of himself, by the pangs of appetites which he had refrained from satiating, and secretly troubled by the struggle of his body in its revolt against a spirit despotic and chaste. But everything that had reference to the flesh filled him with indignation, made him furious; and his sermons, full of threats and indignant allusions, caused the girls to titter and the young fellows to cast sly glances at them across the church; while the farmers in their blue blouses and their wives in their black mantles said to each other on their way home from mass before entering their houses, from the chimney of each of which ascended a thin blue film of smoke:

"He does not joke about the matter, Mo'sieu' the Curé!"

On one occasion, and for very slight cause, he flew into such a passion that he lost his reason. He went to see a sick woman. As soon as he reached the farm-yard, he saw a crowd of children, staring curiously at something, standing there motionless, with concentrated silent attention. The priest walked toward them. It was a dog and her litter of puppies. In front of the kennel five little puppies were swarming around their mother, affectionately licking them, and at the moment when the *curé* stretched forward his head above the heads of the children, a sixth tiny pup was born. All the

brats, seized with joy at the sight of it, began to bawl out, clapping their hands: "Here's another of them! Here's another of them!"

To them it was a pleasure, a natural pleasure, into which nothing impure entered; they gazed at the birth of the puppies just as they would have looked at apples falling from trees. But the man with the black robe was quivering with indignation, and, losing his head, he lifted up his big blue umbrella and began to beat the youngsters, who retreated at full speed. Then, finding himself alone with the animal, he proceeded to beat her also. As in her condition she was unable to run away, she moaned while she struggled against his attack, and, jumping on top of her, he crushed her under his feet, and with a few kicks finished her. Then he left the body bleeding in the midst of the new-born making efforts to get at the mother's teats.

He would take long walks, all alone, with a frown on his face. One evening in May, when he was returning from a place some distance away, and going along by the cliff to get back to the village, a hard shower of rain impeded his progress. He could see no house, only the bare coast on every side riddled by the pelting downpour.

The rough sea dashed against him in masses of foam; and thick black clouds gathering at the horizon redoubled the rain. The wind whistled, blew great guns, battered down the growing crops, and assailed the dripping Abbé, filling his ears with

noises and exciting his heart with its tumultuous din.

He took off his hat, exposing his forehead to the storm, and by degrees approached the descent toward the lowland. But he had such a rattling in his throat that he could not advance farther, and, all of a sudden, he espied near a sheep pasture a shepherd's hut, a kind of movable box on wheels, which the shepherds can drag in summer from pasture to pasture.

Above a wooden stool, a low door was open, affording a view of the straw inside.

The priest was on the point of entering to take shelter when he saw a loving couple embracing each other in the shadow. Thereupon he abruptly closed the door and fastened it; then, getting into the shafts, he bent his lean back and dragged the hut after him, like a horse. And thus he ran along in his drenched cassock toward the steep incline, the fatal incline, with the young couple he had caught together, who were banging their fists against the door of the hut, believing probably that the whole thing was only the practical joke of a passer-by.

When he got to the top of the descent, he let go of the frail structure, which began to roll over the sloping side of the cliff. It then rolled down precipitately, carried along blindly, ever increasing in the speed of its course, leaping, stumbling like an animal, striking the ground with its shafts.

An old beggar, cuddled up in a gap near the cliff,

saw it passing with a rush above his head, and he heard dreadful cries coming from the interior of the wooden box.

Suddenly a wheel fell off, from a collision with a stone; and then the hut, falling on one side, began to topple downward like a ball, like a house torn from its foundation, and tumbling down from the top of a mountain; and then, having reached the edge of the last depression, it turned over, describing a curve in its fall, and at the bottom of the cliff was broken like an egg.

The pair of lovers were picked up, bruised, battered, with all their limbs fractured, still clasped in each other's arms, but now through terror.

The *curé* refused to admit their corpses into the church or to pronounce a benediction over their coffins. And on the following Sunday in his sermon he spoke vehemently about the Seventh Commandment, threatening the lovers with an avenging and mysterious arm, and citing the terrible example of the two wretches killed in the midst of their sin.

As he was leaving the church, two gendarmes arrested him. A coast-guard who was in a sentry-box had seen him. The priest was sentenced to a term of penal servitude. And the peasant who told me the story added gravely:

"I knew him, Monsieur. He was a rough man, that's a fact, but he did not like fooling."

A HUSBAND'S CONFESSION

WHEN Captain Hector-Marie de Fontenne married Mademoiselle Laurine d'Estelle, their relatives and friends thought it would be an unhappy marriage.

Mademoiselle Laurine, pretty, slender, fair, and bold, at twelve years of age had as much self-assurance as a woman of thirty. She was one of those little precocious Parisiennes who seem to be born with all the worldly wisdom, all the little feminine tricks, all the emancipation of ideas, with that astuteness and suppleness of mind that seems to predestinate certain individuals in whatever they do to trick and deceive others. All their actions seem premeditated, all their proceedings a matter of calculation, all their words carefully weighed; their existence is only their part in a drama.

She was also charming; laughed readily, so readily that she could not restrain herself when anything seemed amusing and humorous. She would laugh right in a person's face in the most impudent manner, but she did it so gracefully that no one ever grew angry.

She was rich, very rich. A priest served as go-between in arranging her marriage with Captain de Fontenne. This officer, brought up in a monastery in the most austere manner, had taken with him into his regiment his monastic manners, rigid principles, and absolute intolerance. He was one of those men who invariably become either saints or nihilists; men who are absolutely dominated by an ideal, whose beliefs are inflexible.

He was a big, dark-haired young fellow, serious, severe, with an ingenuous mind, decided and obstinate, one of those men who pass through life without ever understanding its hidden meaning, its shadings and subtleties, who guess at nothing, suspect nothing, and will not allow any one to think differently, form a different opinion, believe or act differently from themselves.

Mademoiselle Laurine saw him, read his character at once, and accepted him as her husband.

They got along well together. She was yielding, clever, and sensible, knowing how to act her part, and always ready to assist in good works, and on the occasion of festivals a constant attendant at church and at the theater, worldly and strict, with a little ironical look, a twinkle in her eye when she chatted gravely with her husband. She told him about her charitable undertakings in association with all the priests of the parish and the environs, and she took advantage of this pious occupation to remain out of doors all day.

But sometimes, in the midst of telling him about an act of charity, she would suddenly go off into an idiotic laugh, a nervous laugh that she could not restrain. The Captain was surprised, perplexed, a little shocked at seeing his wife suffocating with laughter. When she quieted down a little he asked: "What is the matter with you, Laurine?" She replied: "Nothing! I just happened to remember something funny that occurred."

In the summer of 1883, Captain Hector de Fontenne took part in the grand maneuvers of the Thirty-Second Army Corps.

One evening, when they were encamped on the outskirts of a town, after ten days of tenting in the field, ten days of fatigue and privations, the Captain's comrades determined to have a good dinner.

Monsieur de Fontenne refused at first to form one of the party; but, as they seemed surprised at his refusal, he consented.

His neighbor at table, Commandant de Favré, while chatting about military operations, the only thing that interested the Captain, kept filling up his glass with wine. It had been a very warm day, a heavy, dry heat that made one thirsty, and the captain drank without noticing that gradually he was becoming filled with fresh vivacity, with a certain ardent joy, a happiness full of awakened desires, of unknown appetites, of vague hopes.

At dessert he was intoxicated. He talked, laughed, became restless, noisily drunk, with the

mad drunkenness of a man who is habitually quiet and sober.

It was proposed that they should finish the evening at the theater. He accompanied his friends. One of them recognized an actress whom he had been in love with, and they arranged a supper at which were present some of the women of the company.

The following day the Captain awoke in a strange room, and a little, fair woman said, as she saw him open his eyes:

"Good morning, *mon gros chat!*" At first he did not understand. Then, little by little, his memory returned, although it was somewhat indistinct.

Then he got up without saying a word, dressed, and left the room, after emptying his purse on the mantelpiece.

He was filled with shame when he stood up in his uniform, with his sword at his side, in this furnished room with its rumpled curtains and shabby couch, and he was afraid to leave and go down the stairs, where he might meet the janitor, and, above all, he hated to go into the street where the neighbors and passers-by would see him.

The woman kept repeating: "What has happened to you? Have you lost your tongue? It was hung on wires last night, however! What a face!"

He bowed stiffly, and, having decided that he would leave the house, he returned home at a rapid

pace, feeling convinced that every one could tell from his manner, his behavior, his face, where he had been.

He was filled with remorse, the tormenting remorse of an upright, scrupulous man.

He went to confession, and took communion; but he was ill at ease, haunted by the remembrance of his fall and by the feeling of an indebtedness, a sacred indebtedness contracted against his wife.

He did not see her for a month, as she had gone to visit with her parents while the maneuvers lasted.

She came to him with open arms, a smile on her lips. He welcomed her with an embarrassed and guilty air, and avoided almost all conversation until evening.

As soon as they were alone she said:

"What is the matter with you, *mon ami?* I think you have changed very much."

"Nothing is the matter with me, my dear, absolutely nothing."

"Excuse me, I know you well, and I am sure there is something, some anxiety, some sorrow, some annoyance, I know not what."

"Well, then, yes. I have some anxiety."

"Ah! what is it?"

"I cannot possibly tell you."

"Not tell me! Why? You make me uneasy."

"I can give you no reason. It is impossible for me to tell you."

She had sat down on a *causeuse,* and he was

walking up and down the room, his hands behind his back, and avoided looking at his wife. She continued:

"Well, then, I shall have to make you confess; it is my duty, and I shall exact from you the truth; it is my right. You can no more have a secret from me than I can have one from you."

He said, as he turned his back to her and stood framed in the long window:

"My dear, there are certain things it is best not to tell. This thing that worries me is one of them."

She rose, walked across the room, and, taking him by the arm, made him turn round facing her; then, putting her two hands on his shoulders and smiling, she looked up in a caressing manner and said:

"Come, Marie" (she called him Marie in moments of tenderness), "you cannot hide anything from me. I shall imagine that you have done something wrong."

"I have done something very wrong," he murmured.

"Oh, is it as bad as that?" she said gayly. "As bad as that? I am very much astonished at you!"

"I will not tell you any more," he replied, with annoyance; "it is useless to insist."

But she drew him down on the armchair and made him sit down, while she sat on his right knee and gave him a little light kiss, a quick, flying kiss, on the curled tip of his moustache.

"If you will not tell me anything, we shall always be bad friends," she said.

Distracted with remorse and tortured with regret, he murmured:

"If I should tell you what I have done you never would forgive me."

"On the contrary, *mon ami,* I should forgive you at once."

"No, that is not possible."

"I swear I will forgive you."

"No, my dear Laurine, you never could."

"How simple you are, *mon ami,* not to say silly! In refusing to tell me what you have done you allow me to believe all sorts of abominable things; and I shall always be thinking of it, and be as much annoyed at your silence as at your unknown guilt. But if you were to speak to me frankly I should forget all about it by tomorrow."

"Well, then—"

"What?"

He reddened up to his ears, and said in a serious tone:

"I am going to confess to you as if I were confessing to a priest, Laurine."

The fleeting smile with which she sometimes listened to him now came to her lips, and she said, in a slightly mocking tone:

"I am all ears."

"You know, my dear," he resumed, "how sober I am. I never drink anything but water colored

with wine, and never any liquors, as you well know."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, then, just imagine that at the end of the grand maneuvers I forgot myself and drank a little one evening, as I was very thirsty, very tired, very exhausted, and—"

"You became intoxicated? Fie, that was very bad!"

"Yes, I became intoxicated."

She had assumed a severe look.

"Come, now, quite drunk, acknowledge it; so drunk you could not walk, tell the truth!"

"Oh, no; not as bad as that. I had lost my reason, but not my equilibrium. I chattered, I laughed, I was crazy."

He was silent, and she said:

"Is that all?"

"No."

"Oh! And then?"

"And then—I—did something disgraceful."

She looked at him, uneasy, a little disturbed and also touched.

"What was it, *mon ami?*"

"We had supper—with some actresses—and I do not know how it happened, but I was untrue to you, Laurine."

He said all this in a solemn, serious tone.

She was slightly amazed, but her eye lighted up with sudden, intense, irresistible mirth. She said: "You—you—you—"

And a little, dry, nervous, spasmodic laugh escaped her lips, interrupting her speech.

She tried to be serious; but each time she tried to utter a word a laugh began in her throat, was choked back, and came up again like the effervescence in a bottle of champagne that is just uncorked. She put her hand to her mouth to calm herself, to keep back this untimely mirth; but her laughter ran through her fingers, shook her chest, and escaped in spite of herself. She stuttered:

"You—you—deceived me! Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

And she looked at him in a peculiar manner, with such a sneering expression that he was amazed, astonished.

Then, all at once, no longer restraining herself, she burst out laughing as if she had a nervous attack. She uttered little, short screams, which seemed to come from the bottom of her chest; and, placing her hands over her stomach, she gave way to long spasms of laughter, till she almost choked, just like spasms in whooping-cough. And each time she tried to check them she laughed all the more, each word she tried to utter giving her a fresh spasm.

"My—my—my—poor friend—ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!"

He rose, leaving her seated in the chair, and suddenly turning very pale, he said:

"Laurine, your behavior is more than unbecoming."

She stuttered in the midst of her laughter:

"How—how can I—I—I help it—how funny you are—ha! ha! ha! ha!"

He became livid with anger, and looked at her now with a steady gaze in which a strange thought seemed to be awakened. All at once he opened his mouth, as if to say something, but said nothing, and, turning on his heel, he went out, shutting the door behind him.

Laurine, bent double, exhausted and weak, was still laughing, with a faint laugh that revived every few moments like the embers of a fire that has almost burned out.

MADAME PARISSE

I WAS sitting on the pier of the small port of Obernon, near the village of Salis, looking at Antibes, bathed in the setting sun. I never had seen anything so surprising and so beautiful.

The small town, inclosed by its heavy, protective walls, built by Monsieur de Vauban, reached out into the open sea, in the middle of the immense Gulf of Nice. The great waves, coming in from the sea, broke at its feet, surrounding it with a wreath of foam; and beyond the ramparts the houses were climbing the hill, one over another, as far as the two towers which rose up into the sky like the horns of an ancient helmet. These two towers were outlined against the milky whiteness of the Alps, that enormous distant wall of snow which closed in the entire horizon.

Between the white foam at the foot of the walls and the white snow on the sky-line the little city, resting brilliant against the bluish background of the nearest mountain ranges, presented to the rays of the setting sun a pyramid of red-roofed houses,

whose façades were also white, but so different one from another that they seemed of all tints.

And the sky above the Alps was itself of a blue that was almost white, as if the snow had tinted it; some silvery clouds were floating over the pale summits, and on the other side of the Gulf of Nice, down by the water, unrolled like a white thread between the sea and the mountain. Two great sails, driven by a strong breeze, seemed to skim over the waves.

This view was one of those things so sweet, so rare, so delightful, that they penetrate you, and are unforgettable, like the memories of a joy. One sees, thinks, suffers, is moved, and loves with the eyes. He who can feel with the eye experiences the same keen, exquisite, and deep pleasure in looking upon men and things as the man with the delicate and sensitive ear, when music overwhelms his soul.

I turned to my companion, Monsieur Martini, a pure-blooded Southerner.

"This certainly is one of the rarest sights that it has been vouchsafed to me to admire.

"I have seen the Mont Saint-Michel, that monstrous granite jewel, rise out of the sand at sunrise.

"I have seen, in the Sahara, Lake Raianechergui, fifty kilometers long, shining under a moon as brilliant as our sun and breathing up to it a white cloud, like a mist of milk.

"I have seen, in the Lipari Islands, the fantastic

sulphur crater of the Volcanello, a giant flower which fumes and burns, an over-big yellow flower, opening full on the sea, whose stem is a volcano.

"But I have seen nothing more surprising than Antibes, standing against the Alps at the setting sun.

"And I know not how it is that memories of antiquity haunt me; verses of Homer come into my mind; this is a city of the ancient East, a city out of the *Odyssey;* this is Troy, though Troy was far from the sea."

Monsieur Martini drew the guidebook out of his pocket and read: "This city was originally a colony founded by the Phocians of Marseilles, about 340 B. C. They gave it the Greek name of Antipolis, meaning counter-city, city opposite another, because it is in fact opposite to Nice, another colony from Marseilles.

"After the Gauls were conquered, the Romans turned Antibes into a municipal city, its inhabitants receiving the rights of Roman citizenship.

"We know by an epigram of Martial that at his time—"

I interrupted him:

"I don't care what she was. I tell you I see down there a city out of the *Odyssey.* The coast of Asia and the coast of Europe resemble each other in their shores, and no city on the other coast of the Mediterranean awakens in me the memories of the heroic times as this one does."

A footstep caused me to turn my head; a woman,

a large, dark woman, was walking along the road that skirts the sea in going to the cape.

"That is Madame Parisse, you know," muttered Monsieur Martini, dwelling on the final syllable.

No, I did not know, but that name, pronounced nonchalantly, that name of the Trojan shepherd, confirmed me in my dream.

Yet I asked: "Who is this Madame Parisse?"

He seemed astonished that I did not know the story.

I assured him that I did not know it, and I looked after the woman, who passed by without seeing us, dreaming, walking with steady and slow step, as doubtless the ladies of old walked.

She was perhaps thirty-five years of age, and still very beautiful, though a trifle stout.

And Monsieur Martini told me the following story:

Mademoiselle Combelombe was married, one year before the war of 1870 to Monsieur Parisse, a government official. She was then a handsome young girl, as slender and lively as she has now become stout and sad.

Unwillingly she had accepted Monsieur Parisse, one of those little fat men with short legs who trip along, with trousers always too large.

After the war Antibes was occupied by a single battalion commanded by Monsieur Jean de Carmelin, a young officer decorated during the war, who had just received his four stripes.

As he found life exceedingly tedious in this fortress, this stuffy mole-hole inclosed by the enormous double walls, he often strolled out to the cape, a kind of park or pine wood whipped by all the winds from the sea.

There he met Madame Parisse, who came out in summer evenings to get the fresh air under the trees. How did they love each other? Who knows? They met, they looked at each other, and when out of sight they doubtless thought of each other. The image of the young woman with the brown eyes, the black hair, the pale skin, this fresh, handsome Southerner, who displayed her teeth in smiling, was floating before the eyes of the officer as he continued his promenade, biting his cigar instead of smoking; and the image of the commanding officer, in his close-fitting coat, covered with gold, and his red trousers, with a little blond moustache, would pass in the evening before the eyes of Madame Parisse, when her husband, half-shaven and ill-clad, short-legged and big-bellied, came home to supper.

Meeting so often, they perhaps smiled at the next meeting; then, seeing each other again and again, they thought they knew each other. He certainly bowed to her. And she, surprised, bowed in return, but very, very slightly, just enough for politeness. But after two weeks she returned his salutation when away off, even before they were side by side.

He spoke to her. Of what? Doubtless of the setting sun. They admired it together, looking for it in each other's eyes oftener than on the horizon. And every evening for two weeks this was the commonplace and persistent pretext for a few minutes' chat.

Then they hazarded a few steps together, talking of anything that came along, but their eyes were already saying to each other a thousand more intimate things, those secret, charming things that are reflected in the gentle emotion of the eye, and that cause the heart to beat, for they are a better confession of the soul than the spoken word.

And then he would take her hand, murmuring those words which the woman divines without seeming to hear them.

And it was agreed between them that they would love each other without making proof of it by anything sensual or brutal.

She would have remained indefinitely at this stage of intimacy, but he wanted more. And every day he urged her more hotly to give in to his violent desire.

She resisted, she did not want it, she seemed determined not to give way.

Yet one evening she said to him, casually: "My husband has just gone to Marseilles. He will be away four days."

Jean de Carmelin threw himself at her feet, imploring her to open her door to him that very night

at eleven o'clock. But she would not listen to him, and she went home with angry mien.

The commander was in bad humor all the evening, and the next morning at dawn he went out on the ramparts in a rage, from one exercise field to the other, dealing out punishments to the officers and men as one might fling stones into a crowd.

On coming back for his breakfast, he found an envelope under his napkin with these three words: "To-night at ten." And he gave one hundred sous off-hand to the waiter serving him.

The day seemed endless to him. He passed part of it in curling his hair and perfuming himself.

As he was sitting down to the dinner-table, another envelope was handed to him, and in it he found the following telegram:

"My Love: Business done. I return this evening on the nine o'clock train. Parissé."

The commander swore such a big oath that the waiter dropped the soup-tureen on the floor.

What should he do? He certainly wanted her, that very evening, at whatever cost; and he would have her. He would resort to any means, even to arresting and imprisoning the husband. Then a mad thought struck him. Calling for paper, he wrote the following note:

"Madame: He will not come back this evening, I swear it to you, and I shall be where you know at ten

o'clock. Fear nothing. I will answer for everything, on my honor as an officer.

"JEAN DE CARMELIN."

And, having sent off this letter, he calmly dined.

Toward eight o'clock he sent for Captain Gribois, the second in command, and he said, rolling between his fingers the crumpled telegram of Monsieur Parisse:

"Captain, I have just received a telegram of a very singular nature, which it is impossible for me to communicate to you. You will immediately have all the gates of the city closed and guarded, so that no one, mind me, no one, will either enter or leave before six in the morning. You will also have men patrol the streets, who will compel the inhabitants to retire to their houses at nine o'clock. And one found outside beyond that time will be conducted to his home *manu militari*. If your men meet me tonight they will quickly go out of my way, appearing not to know me. You understand me?"

"Yes, Commander."

"Would you like to have a glass of Chartreuse?"

"With great pleasure, Commander."

They clinked glasses and drank the brown liquor, and Captain Gribois left the room.

The train from Marseilles arrived at the station at nine o'clock sharp, left two passengers on the platform, and went on toward Nice.

One of them, tall and thin, was Monsieur Saribe,

the oil merchant, and the other, short and fat, was Monsieur Parisse.

Together they set out, with their valises, to reach the city, one kilometer distant.

But when they arrived at the gate of the port the guards crossed their bayonets, warning them to retire.

Frightened, surprised, cowed with astonishment, they retired to deliberate; then, after taking counsel one with the other, they came back cautiously to parley, giving their names.

But the soldiers evidently had strict orders, for they threatened to shoot; and the two scared travelers ran off, throwing away their valises, which impeded their flight.

Making the tour of the ramparts, they presented themselves at the gate on the route to Cannes. This likewise was closed and guarded by a menacing sentinel. The Messrs. Saribe and Parisse, like the prudent men they were, desisted from their efforts, and went back to the station for shelter, as it was not safe to be near the fortification after sunset.

The station agent, surprised and somnolent, permitted them to remain till morning in the waiting-room.

And they sat there side by side, in the dark, on the green velvet sofa, too frightened to think of sleeping.

It was a long and weary night for them.

At half-past six in the morning they were informed that the gates were open, and that people could now enter Antibes.

They set out for the city, but they failed to find their abandoned valises on the road.

When they passsed through the gates, still somewhat anxious, the Commandant de Carmelin, with sly glance and moustache turned up, came himself to look over and examine them.

Then he bowed to them politely, excusing himself for having caused them a bad night. But he had to carry out orders.

The people of Antibes were scared to death. Some spoke of a surprise planned by the Italians; others, of the landing of the Prince Imperial; and others, again, believed that there was an Orleanistic conspiracy. The truth was suspected only later, when the battalion of the commandant was sent very far away, and Monsieur de Carmelin had been severely punished.

When Madame Parisse returned, her promenade being terminated, she passed gravely near me, with her eyes fixed on the Alps, whose summits were now rosy in the last rays of the setting sun.

I felt like saluting her, this poor, sad woman, who would ever be thinking of this night of love, now far distant, and of the bold man who for the sake of a kiss from her had dared to put a city into a state of siege and to compromise his whole future.

And to-day he had probably forgotten her, if he did not relate this audacious, comical, and tender farce to his comrades over the cups.

Had she seen him again? Did she still love him? And I thought: Here is an instance of modern love, grotesque and yet heroic. The Homer to sing of this new Helena and the adventure of her Menelaus must be gifted with the soul of Paul de Kock. And yet the hero of this deserted woman was brave, daring, handsome, strong, like Achilles, and more cunning than Ulysses.

THE WEDDING NIGHT

JACQUÉS BOURDILLÉRE had sworn that he never would marry; but he suddenly changed his mind. It happened suddenly, one summer, at the seashore.

One morning, as he lay stretched out on the sand, watching the women coming out of the water, a little foot had struck him by its neatness and daintiness. He looked higher and was delighted with the whole person. By the way, he could see nothing but the ankles and the head emerging from a flannel bathrobe carefully held closed. He was supposed to be sensual and a fast liver. It was, therefore, only the graceful form that at first captured him; then he was held by the charm of the young girl's sweet mind, so simple and good, as fresh as her cheeks and lips.

He was presented to the family, and he pleased them. He immediately fell madly in love. When he saw Berthe Lannis in the distance, on the long yellow stretch of sand, he would tingle to the roots of his hair. When he was near her he would be-

come silent, unable to speak or even to think, with a kind of bubbling in his heart, of buzzing in his ears, and of bewilderment in his mind. Was that love?

He did not know or understand, but he had fully decided to have this child for his wife.

Her parents hesitated for a long time, restrained by the young man's bad reputation. It was said that he had an old sweetheart, one of the binding attachments which one always believes to be broken off and yet which always hold.

Besides, for a shorter or longer period, he loved every woman who came within reach of his lips.

Then he settled down and refused, even once, to see the one with whom he had lived so long. A friend took care of this woman's pension and assured her an income. Jacques paid, but he did not even wish to hear of her, pretending even to forget her name. She wrote him letters, which he never opened. Every week he recognized the clumsy writing of the abandoned woman, and every week a greater anger surged within him against her, and he would tear the envelope and the paper, without opening it, without reading one single line, knowing the reproaches and complaints which it contained.

As but little faith existed in his constancy, the test was prolonged through the winter, and Berthe's hand was not granted him until the spring. The wedding took place in Paris at the beginning of May.

The young couple had decided not to take the

conventional wedding trip; but after a little dance for the younger cousins, which would not be prolonged after eleven o'clock, in order that this day of long ceremonies might not be too tiresome, the young pair were to spend the first night in the parental home, and then, on the following morning, to leave for the beach so dear to their hearts, where they had known and loved each other.

Night had come, and the dance was going on in the large parlor. The two had retired to a little Japanese boudoir, hung with bright silks and dimly lighted by the soft rays of a large colored lantern hanging from the ceiling like a gigantic egg. Through the open window the fresh air from outside passed over their faces like a caress, for the night was warm and calm, with the odor of spring.

They were saying nothing to each other; they were holding each other's hands, and from time to time squeezing them hard. She sat there with a dreamy look, feeling a little lost by this great change in her life, but smiling, moved, ready to cry, often, also, ready almost to faint from joy, believing the whole world to be changed by what had just happened to her, nervous she knew not why, and feeling her whole body and soul filled by an indefinable and delicious lassitude.

He was looking at her persistently with a fixed smile. He wished to speak, but found nothing to say, and so sat there, putting all his ardor into pres-

sures of the hand. From time to time he would murmur: "Berthe!" And each time she would raise her eyes to him with a look of tenderness; they would look at each other for a second, and then her look, pierced and fascinated by his, would fall.

They found no thoughts to exchange. They had been left alone, but occasionally some of the dancers would cast a rapid glance at them, as if they were the discreet and trusting witnesses of a mystery.

A door opened and a servant entered, with a letter which a messenger had just brought. Jacques, trembling, took this paper, overwhelmed by a vague and sudden fear, the mysterious terror of swift misfortune.

He looked for a long time at the envelope, the writing on which he did not know, not daring to open it, not wishing to read it, with a wild desire to put it into his pocket and say to himself: "I'll leave that till to-morrow, when I'm far away!" But on one corner two words stared at him, "*Very urgent,*" filling him with terror. Saying: "Please excuse me, my dear," he tore open the envelope. He read the paper, grew frightfully pale, looked over it again, and, slowly, he seemed to spell it out word for word.

When he raised his head his whole face was upset. He stammered: "My dear, it—it's from my best friend, who has had a very great misfortune. He has need of me immediately—for a

matter of life or death. Will you excuse me if I leave you for half an hour? I'll be right back."

Trembling and dazed, she stammered: "Go, my dear;" not yet having been his wife long enough to dare to question him, to demand to know. He disappeared. She remained alone, listening to the dancing in the neighboring parlor.

He had seized the first hat and coat he came to, and jumped down the stairs three at a time. As he was emerging into the street he stopped under the gas-jet of the vestibule and re-read the letter. This is what it said:

"SIR: A girl named Ravet, an old sweetheart of yours, it seems, has just given birth to a child that she declares is yours. The mother is about to die and is begging for you. I take the liberty to write and ask you to grant this last request to a woman who seems to be very unhappy and worthy of pity. Yours truly,

"DR. BONNARD."

When he reached the sick-room the woman was already at the point of death. He did not recognize her at first. The doctor and two nurses were taking care of her. And everywhere on the floor were pails full of ice and rags covered with blood. Water flooded the carpet; two candles were burning on a bureau; behind the bed, in a little wicker crib, the child was crying, and each time it moaned, the mother, in torture, would try to move, shivering under her ice bandages.

She was wounded to death by his birth. Her life was flowing from her; and, notwithstanding the ice and the care, the merciless hemorrhage continued, hastening her last hour.

She recognized Jacques, and wished to raise her arms. They were so weak that she could not, but tears coursed down her pallid cheeks.

He dropped to his knees beside the bed, seized one of her hands, and kissed it frantically; then, little by little, he drew nearer to the thin face, which started at the contact. One of the nurses was lighting them with a candle, and the doctor was watching them from the back of the room.

Then she said, in a voice that sounded as if it came from a distance: "I am going to die, dear; promise to stay to the end. Oh! don't leave me now. Don't leave me at the last minute!"

He kissed her face and her hair, and, weeping, he murmured: "Never fear, I will stay."

It was several minutes before she could speak again, she was so weak. She continued: "The little one is yours. I swear it before God and on my soul. I swear it as I am dying! I never have loved another man but you. Promise to take care of the child."

He was trying to take this poor pain-racked body in his arms. Maddened by remorse and sorrow, he stammered: "I swear to you that I will bring him up and love him. He never shall leave me."

Then she tried to kiss Jacques. Powerless to lift

her head, she held out her white lips in an appeal for a kiss. He approached his lips to pluck this poor caress.

As soon as she felt a little calmer, she murmured: "Bring him here, and let me see whether you love him."

He went and got the child, and placed him gently on the bed between them, and the little one stopped crying. She murmured: "Don't move any more!" And he was quiet. And he stayed there, holding in his burning hand this other one shaken by the shivers of death, just as, a while ago, he had been holding a hand trembling with love. From time to time he cast a quick glance at the clock, which marked midnight, then one o'clock, then two.

The physician had returned; the two nurses, after moving noiselessly around through the room for a while, were now sleeping on chairs. The child was sleeping, and the mother, with eyes shut, appeared also to be resting.

Suddenly, just as the pale daylight was creeping in behind the curtains, she stretched out her arms with such a quick and violent motion that she almost threw her baby on the floor. A kind of rattle was heard in her throat, then she lay on her back motionless, dead.

The nurses sprang forward and declared: "All is over!"

He looked once more at this woman whom he had so loved, then at the clock, which pointed to

four, and he ran away, forgetting his overcoat, in evening dress, with the child in his arms.

After she had been left alone, the young wife had waited, calmly enough at first, in the little Japanese boudoir. Then, as she did not see him return, she went back to the parlor with an indifferent and calm appearance, but terribly anxious. When her mother saw her alone she asked: "Where is your husband?" and was answered: "In his room; he is coming right back."

After an hour, when everybody had questioned her, she told about the letter, Jacques's disturbed appearance, and her fears of an accident.

Still they waited. The guests left; only the nearest relatives remained. At midnight the bride was put to bed, all shaken by tears. Her mother and two aunts, sitting around the bed, were listening to her cry, silent and in despair. The father had gone to the commissary of police to obtain some news if possible.

At five o'clock a slight noise was heard in the hall; a door was softly opened and closed; then suddenly a little cry like the mewing of a cat was heard through the silent house.

All the women started forward, and Berthe sprang ahead of them all, pushing her way past her aunts, wrapped in a bathrobe.

Jacques stood in the middle of the room, pale and panting, holding an infant in his arms. The four women looked at him, astonished; but Berthe, who

had suddenly become courageous, rushed forward with anguish in her heart, exclaiming: "What is it? What's the matter?"

He looked around wildly and answered shortly: "I—I have a child, and the mother has just died." And in his clumsy hands he held out the howling infant.

Without saying a word, Berthe seized the child, kissed it, and hugged it to her; then she raised her tear-filled eyes to him, asking: "Did you say that the mother was dead?" He answered: "Yes—in my arms. I had broken with her last summer. I knew nothing. The physician sent for me."

Then Berthe murmured: "Well, we will bring up the little one."

FATHER AND SON

IN front of the building, half farmhouse, half manor house, one of those rural habitations of a mixed character which were all but seigneurial, and which are now occupied by wealthy farmers, the dogs lashed beside the apple-trees in the orchard near the house kept barking and howling at sight of the shooting-bags carried by the gamekeepers and at the boys. In the spacious dining-room-kitchen, Hautot Senior and Hautot Junior, M. Bermont, the tax-collector, and M. Mondaru, the notary, were eating and drinking before going out shooting, for it was the first day of the season.

Hautot Senior, proud of all his possessions, talked boastfully of the game his guests were going to find on his lands. He was a big Norman, one of those powerful, ruddy men, with large bones, who lift wagon-loads of apples on their shoulders. Half peasant, half gentleman, rich, respected, influential, autocratic, he obliged his son César to go through the third form at college so that he might be an educated man, and there he had brought his

studies to an end, for fear of his becoming a fine gentleman and neglecting the land.

César Hautot, almost as tall as his father, but thinner, was a good son, docile, content with everything, full of admiration, respect and deference for the wishes and opinions of Hautot Senior.

M. Bermont, the tax-collector, a stout little man, who showed on his red cheeks a thin network of violet veins resembling the tributaries and the winding courses of rivers on maps, asked:

"And hares—are there any hares?"

Hautot Senior answered:

"As many as you wish, especially in the Puysatier lands."

"How shall we set out?" asked the notary, an epicure of a notary, pale and corpulent, with a brand-new hunting costume belted in, which he had bought at Rouen.

"That way, through the bottoms. We will drive the partridges into the plain, and we can get them there."

And Hautot Senior rose. They all followed his example, took their guns out of the corners, examined the locks, and stamped their feet in order to adjust their boots, which were rather hard, not having become flexible from wear. Then they went out; and the dogs, standing on their hind legs at the ends of their leashes, gave tongue while beating the air with their paws.

They set out toward the bottoms referred to. These consisted of a little valley, or, rather, a long,

undulating stretch of poor land, which on that account had remained uncultivated, furrowed with ditches and covered with ferns, an excellent preserve for game.

The sportsmen took up their positions at some distance from each other, Hautot Senior at the right, Hautot Junior at the left, and the two guests in the middle. The gamekeeper, and others carrying the game-bags, followed. It was the solemn moment when the first shot is awaited, when the heart beats a little, while the nervous finger keeps feeling the trigger.

Suddenly a shot was heard. Hautot Senior had fired. They all stopped, and saw a partridge separate from a covey which had risen and fallen down into a deep ditch under a thick growth of brush. The sportsman, becoming excited, rushed forward with rapid strides, thrusting aside the briars that stood in his path, and in his turn disappeared in the thicket, in quest of his game.

Almost at the same instant a second shot was heard.

"Ha! ha! the rascal!" exclaimed M. Bermont; "he must have started a hare down there."

They all waited, with their eyes riveted on the mass of brush which their gaze failed to penetrate.

The notary, making a speaking trumpet of his hands, shouted:

"Have you got them?"

Hautot Senior made no response.

Then César, turning to the gamekeeper, said:

"Just go and assist him, Joseph. We must keep walking in line. We'll wait."

And Joseph, an old stump of a man, lean and knotty, all of whose joints formed protuberances, set off at an easy pace down into the ditch, searching with the cautiousness of a fox every opening through which a passage could be effected. Then, suddenly, he cried:

"Oh! come! come! an accident has occurred."

They all hurried forward, plunging through the briars.

The elder Hautot had fallen on his side, in a faint, with both hands pressed to his abdomen, from which blood trickled through his shooting-jacket, torn by a bullet. Letting go of his gun, in order to pick up the dead partridge, he had let the firearm fall, and the second barrel, going off with the shock, had torn open his entrails. They drew him out of the trench, removed his clothes, and saw a frightful wound, through which the intestines protruded. Then, having ligatured him the best way they could, they brought him to his own house, and awaited the doctor, who had been sent for, as well as the priest.

When the doctor arrived he gravely shook his head, and, turning toward young Hautot, who was sobbing on a chair, he said:

"My poor boy, this does not look at all favorable."

But, when the wound was dressed, the wounded man moved his fingers, opened his mouth, then his eyes, cast around him troubled, haggard glances, then appeared to be trying to recall, to understand, and murmured:

"Ah! good God! this has finished me!"

The doctor held his hand.

"Why, no; some days of rest merely—it will be nothing."

Hautot replied:

"It has finished me! My abdomen is gashed! I know it well."

Then, all of a sudden:

"I wish to talk to my son, if I have time."

Hautot Junior, in spite of himself, shed tears, and kept repeating like a little boy:

"Papa, papa, poor papa!"

But the father, in a firm tone, said:

"Come! stop crying—this is no time for it. I have something to say to you. Sit down there, quite close to me. It will not take long, and I shall be more calm. As for the rest of you, kindly leave us alone for a minute."

They all went out, leaving the father and son together.

As soon as they were alone:

"Listen, son!" he said, "you are twenty-four; one can talk to you. And then there is not such mystery about these matters as we attach to them. You know, do you not, that your mother has been dead seven years, and that I am not more than

forty-five years myself, seeing that I was married at nineteen. Is not that true?"

"Yes, it is true."

"So then your mother has been dead seven years, and I have remained a widower. Well! a man like me cannot remain without a wife at thirty-seven, isn't that true?"

The son replied:

"Yes, it is true."

The father, out of breath, very pale, and his face contracted with suffering, continued:

"God! how I suffer! Well, you understand. Man is not made to live alone, but I was unwilling to take a successor to your mother, since I promised her not to do so. Therefore—you understand?"

"Yes, father."

"Well, I kept a young girl at Rouen, number eighteen, Rue de l'Eperlan, on the third floor, the second door—I am telling you all this, don't forget—a young girl, who has been very nice to me, loving, devoted, a true woman, eh? You understand, my lad?"

"Yes, father."

"So then, if I am carried off, I owe something to her, something substantial, that will place her beyond the reach of want. You understand?"

"Yes, father."

"I tell you that she is a good girl, and, but for you, and the remembrance of your mother, and also

because we three lived together in this house, I would have brought her here, and then married her. Listen—listen, my boy—I might have made a will—I haven't done so. I did not wish to do so—for it is not necessary to write down things—things of this sort—it is too damaging to the legitimate children—and then it makes confusion—it ruins every one! Look you, lawyers, there's no need of them—never consult one. If I am rich, it is because I never have employed one. You understand, my son?"

"Yes, father."

"Listen again—listen attentively! So then, I have made no will—I did not desire to do so—and then I knew you; you have a good heart, you are not covetous, not stingy, and I said to myself that when my end approached I would tell you all about it, and that I would beg of you not to forget the girl. And then listen again! When I am gone, go and see her at once—and make such arrangements that she may revere my memory. You have plenty of means. You can spare it—I leave you enough. Listen! You won't find her at home every day in the week. She works at Madame Moreau's in the Rue Beauvoisine. Go there on a Thursday. That is the day she expects me. It has been my day for the past six years. Poor little girl! she will weep!—I say all this to you, because I know you so well, my son. One does not tell these things in public, either to the notary or to the priest. They

happen—every one knows that—but they are not talked about, save in case of necessity. Then there must be no outsider in the secret, nobody except the family, because the family consists of one person alone. You understand?"

"Yes, father."

"Do you promise?"

"Yes, father."

"Do you swear it?"

"Yes, father."

"I beg of you, I implore of you, son, do not forget. I insist on this."

"No, father."

"You will go yourself. I want you to make sure of everything."

"Yes, father."

"And then, you will see—you will see what she will explain to you. As for me, I can say no more to you. You have sworn to do it."

"Yes, father."

"That's good, my son. Embrace me. Farewell. I am going to die, I'm sure. Tell them they may come in."

Young Hautot embraced his father, groaning as he did so; then, always docile, he opened the door, and the priest appeared in a white surplice, carrying the holy oils.

But the dying man had closed his eyes and refused to open them again; he refused to answer, and even to show by a sign that he understood.

He had talked enough, this man; he could speak no longer. Besides, he now felt his heart at ease and wanted to die in peace. What need had he to make a confession to the deputy of God, since he had just confessed to his son, who constituted his family?

Without any movement of his face indicating that he still lived, he received the last rites, was purified, and received absolution, surrounded by his friends and his servants on their bended knees.

He expired about midnight, after four hours of spasms, which showed that he must have suffered dreadfully.

He was buried on Tuesday, the shooting-season having opened on Sunday. On returning home after the funeral César Hautot spent the rest of the day weeping. He hardly slept that night, and felt so sad on awaking that he asked himself how he could go on living.

However, he kept thinking that, in order to obey his father's dying wish, he must go to Rouen the following day, and see this girl Caroline Donet, who lived at eighteen Rue de l'Eperlan, the third story, second door. He had muttered to himself this name and address a countless number of times, just as a child repeats a prayer, so that he might not forget them, and he ended by repeating them continually, without thinking, so impressed were they on his mind.

Accordingly, on the following day, about eight

o'clock, he ordered Graindorge to be harnessed to the tilbury, and set forth, at the long, swinging pace of the heavy Norman horse, along the highway from Ainville to Rouen. He wore his black frock coat, his tall silk hat, and his trousers strapped under his shoes, and, being in mourning, did not put on his blue dust-coat.

He entered Rouen at ten o'clock, put up, as he had always done, at the Hôtel des Bons-Enfants, in the Rue des Trois-Mares, and submitted to the embraces of the landlord and his wife and their five children, for they had heard the melancholy news; after that, he had to tell them all the particulars of the accident, which caused him to shed tears; to repel all the attentions they sought to thrust upon him merely because he was wealthy; and to decline even the luncheon they offered him, thus wounding their sensibilities.

Then, having wiped the dust off his hat, brushed his coat, and removed the mud-stains from his boots, he set forth in search of the Rue de l'Eperlan, without venturing to make inquiries, for fear of being recognized and of arousing suspicion.

At last, unable to find the place, he met a priest, and, trusting to the professional discretion of the clergy, he questioned the ecclesiastic.

He had only a hundred steps farther to go; it was the second street to the right.

Then he hesitated. Up to that moment he had obeyed, like a mere animal, the expressed wish of

his father. Now he was agitated, confused, humiliated, at the idea of finding himself—the son—in the presence of this woman who had been his father's sweetheart. All the morality we possess, which lies buried at the bottom of our emotions through centuries of hereditary instruction, all that he had been taught since he had learned his catechism about creatures of evil life, the instinctive contempt which every man entertains toward them, even though he may marry one of them, all the narrow honesty of the peasant in his character, was stirred within him, and held him back, making him grow red with shame.

But he said to himself:

"I promised father. I must not break my promise."

So he pushed open the partly opened door of number eighteen, saw a gloomy-looking staircase, ascended three flights, perceived a door, then a second door, saw a bell-rope, and pulled it. The ringing, which resounded in the apartment, sent a shiver through his frame. The door was opened, and he found himself face-to-face with a well-dressed young lady, a brunette with rosy cheeks, who gazed at him in astonishment.

He did not know what to say, and she, who suspected nothing, and who was waiting for the father, did not invite him to come in. They stood looking thus at each other nearly half a minute, at the end of which she said in a questioning tone:

"Do you want anything, Monsieur?"

He falteringly replied:

"I am Monsieur Hautot's son."

She gave a start, turned pale, and stammered out, as if she had known him for a long time:

"Monsieur César!"

"Yes."

"And what then?"

"I have come with a message to you from my father."

She exclaimed:

"Oh, my God!" and then drew back so that he might enter. He shut the door and followed her into the apartment. Then he perceived a little boy of four or five years playing with a cat, seated on the floor in front of a stove, from which rose an odor of food being kept ho..

"Take a seat," she said.

He sat down.

"Well?" she questioned.

He no longer ventured to speak, keeping his eyes fixed on a table that stood in the center of the room, with three covers laid on it, one of which was for a child, and a bottle of claret that had been opened, and one of white wine that had not been uncorked. He glanced at the chair with its back turned to the fire. That was his father's chair! They were expecting him. That was his bread which he saw at his place, for the crust had been removed on account of Hautot's bad teeth. Then,

raising his eyes, he noticed on the wall his father's portrait, the large photograph taken in Paris the year of the exhibition, the same as that which hung above the bed in the sleeping-apartment at Ainville.

The young woman again asked:

"Well, Monsieur César?"

He kept staring at her. Her face was livid with anxiety, and she waited, her hands trembling with fear.

Then he took courage.

"Well, Mam'zelle, papa died on Sunday last, just after he had opened the shooting-season."

She was so overwhelmed that she did not move. After a silence of a few seconds, she faltered in an almost inaudible tone:

"Oh, it is not possible!"

Then, on a sudden, tears came into her eyes, and covering her face with her hands, she burst out sobbing.

At that point the little boy turned round, and, seeing his mother weeping, began to roar. Then, realizing that this sudden trouble was brought about by the stranger, he rushed at César, caught hold of his trousers with one hand and with the other hit him with all his strength on the thigh. And César remained bewildered, deeply affected, with this woman mourning for his father on the one hand, and the little boy defending his mother on the other. He felt their emotion taking possession of him, and his eyes were beginning to fill with

tears; so, to recover his self-command, he began to talk.

"Yes," he said, "the accident occurred on Sunday, at eight o'clock—"

And he told all the facts as if she were listening to him, without forgetting a single detail, mentioning the most trivial matters with the minuteness of a countryman. And the child was still attacking him, kicking his ankles.

When he came to what his father had said about her she took her hands from her face and said:

"Pardon me! I was not following you; I should like to know— Would you mind beginning over again?"

He repeated everything in the same words with pauses and reflections of his own from time to time. She listened eagerly now, perceiving with a woman's keen sensibility all the sudden changes of fortune which his narrative implied, and trembling with horror, frequently exclaiming:

"Oh, my God!"

The little fellow, believing that she had calmed down, ceased beating César, in order to take his mother's hand, and he listened, too, as if he understood.

When the narrative was finished, young Hautot continued:

"Now, we will settle matters together in accordance with his wishes. I am well off, he has left

me plenty of means. I don't wish you to have anything to complain about—"

But she quickly interrupted him.

"Oh! Monsieur César, Monsieur César, not to-day. I am cut to the heart—another time—another day. No, not to-day. If I accept, listen—it is not for myself—no, no, no, I swear to you, it is for the child. Besides, this sum will be placed to his account."

Thereupon, César, horrified, guessed the truth, and stammered:

"So then—it is his—the child?"

"Why, yes," she said.

And Hautot Junior gazed at his brother with a confused emotion, intense and painful.

After a long silence, for she was weeping afresh, César, embarrassed, continued:

"Well, then, Mam'zelle Donet, I am going. When would you wish to talk this over with me?"

She exclaimed:

"Oh! no, don't go! don't go! Don't leave me all alone with Emile. I should die of grief. I have no longer any one, any one but my child. Oh! what wretchedness, what wretchedness, Monsieur César! Come, sit down again. Tell me something more. Tell me what he did at home all the week."

And César, accustomed to obey, resumed his seat.

She drew over another chair for herself in front of the stove, where the dishes had all this time been heating, took Emile upon her knees, and asked

César a thousand questions about his father—questions of an intimate nature, which made him feel, without reasoning on the subject, that she had loved Hautot with all the strength of her weak woman's heart.

And, by the natural sequence of his ideas—which were rather limited in number—he recurred once more to the accident, and set about telling the story over again with all the same details.

When he said:

"He had a hole in his stomach that you could put your two fists into," she gave a sort of shriek, and her eyes again filled with tears.

Then, seized by the contagion of her grief, César began to weep, too, and as tears always soften the fibers of the heart, he bent over Emile, whose forehead was close to his own mouth, and kissed him.

The mother, recovering her breath, murmured:

"Poor child, he is an orphan now!"

"And so am I," said César.

And they were silent.

But suddenly the practical instinct of the housewife, accustomed to think of everything, revived in the young woman's breast.

"You perhaps have had nothing to eat all the morning, Monsieur César."

"No, Mam'zelle."

"You must be hungry. You will eat a morsel."

"Thank you," he said, "I am not hungry; I have had too much sorrow."

She replied:

"In spite of sorrow, we must live. You will not refuse to let me get something for you! And then you will remain a little longer. When you are gone, I don't know what will become of me."

He yielded after some further resistance, and, sitting down with his back to the fire, facing her, he ate a plateful of tripe, which had been drying up in the gravy, and drank a glass of red wine. But he would not allow her to uncork the bottle of white wine. He several times wiped the mouth of the little boy, who had smeared his chin with gravy.

As he rose to take his leave, he asked:

"When would you like me to come back to talk about this matter, Mam'zelle Donet?"

"If it is all the same to you, say next Thursday, Monsieur César. In that way I shall not waste my time, as I always have my Thursdays free."

"That will suit me—next Thursday."

"You will come to luncheon, won't you?"

"Oh! On that point I can't give you a promise."

"The reason I suggested it is, that people can chat better when they are eating. One has more time, too."

"Well, be it so. About twelve o'clock then."

And he took his departure, after he had again kissed little Emile, and pressed Mademoiselle Donet's hand.

The week appeared long to César Hautot. He

never before had lived alone, and the isolation seemed to him unendurable. Till now he had lived at his father's side, like his shadow, followed him into the fields, superintended the execution of his orders, and, if they were separated for a short time, they again met at dinner. They spent the evenings smoking their pipes together, sitting opposite each other, chatting about horses, cows, or sheep, and the grip of their hands when they rose in the morning was a manifestation of deep family affection.

Now César was alone. He went mechanically about his autumn duties on the farm, expecting any moment to see his father's tall, energetic outline rising at the end of a level field. To kill time, he visited his neighbors, told about the accident to all who had not heard of it, and sometimes repeated it to the others. Then, having exhausted his occupations and his reflections, he would sit down at the side of the road, asking himself whether this kind of life was going to last forever.

He frequently thought of Mademoiselle Donet. He liked her. He considered her thoroughly respectable, a gentle, good young woman, as his father had said. Yes, undoubtedly she was a good girl. He resolved to act handsomely toward her, and to give her two thousand francs a year, settling the principal on the child. He even experienced a certain pleasure in thinking that he was going to see her on the following Thursday and arrange this

matter. And then the thought of this brother, this little chap of five, who was his father's son, worried him, annoyed him a little, and, at the same time, pleased him. He had, as it were, a family in this youngster, sprung from a clandestine alliance, who never would bear the name of Hautot—a family which he might take or leave, as he pleased, but which reminded him of his father.

And so, when he saw himself on the road to Rouen Thursday morning, borne along by Graindorge with his measured trot, he felt his heart lighter, more at peace than it had been since his bereavement.

On entering Mademoiselle Donet's apartment, he saw the table laid as on the previous Thursday, with the sole difference that the crust had not been removed from the bread. He pressed the young woman's hand, kissed Emile on the cheeks, and sat down, much as if he were in his own house, although his heart was full. Mademoiselle Donet seemed to him a little thinner and paler. She must have grieved sorely. She now appeared constrained in his presence, as if she understood what she had not felt the week before under the first blow of her misfortune, and she exhibited an excessive deference toward him, a mournful humility, and made efforts to please him, as if to repay his kindness. They were a long time at luncheon, talking over the business that had brought him there. She did not want so much money. It was too

much. She earned enough to live on herself, and she only wished that Emile might find a few sous awaiting him when he grew up. César was firm, however, and even added a gift of a thousand francs for the expenses of mourning.

When he had taken his coffee, she asked:

"Do you smoke?"

"Yes—I have my pipe."

He felt in his pocket. Good heavens! He had forgotten it! He was becoming quite distressed about it when she offered him a pipe of his father's that had been put away in a closet. He took it up, recognized it, smelled it, spoke of its quality in a tone of emotion, filled it with tobacco, and lighted it. Then he set Emile astride his knee, and gave him a ride, while she removed the tablecloth and piled the soiled dishes under the sideboard, intending to wash them as soon as he was gone.

About three o'clock he rose regretfully, annoyed at the thought of having to go.

"Well! Mademoiselle Donet," he said, "I wish you good evening, and am delighted to have found you like this."

She remained standing before him, blushing, much affected, and gazed at him while she thought of the father.

"Shall we not see each other again?" she said.

He replied simply:

"Yes, Mademoiselle, if it gives you pleasure."

"Certainly, Monsieur César. Will next Thursday suit you?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Donet."

"You will come to luncheon, of course?"

"Well—if you are so kind as to invite me, I can't refuse."

"It is understood, then, Monsieur César—next Thursday, at twelve, the same as today."

"Thursday at twelve, Mademoiselle Donet!"

THE FALSE JEWELS

MONSIEUR LANTIN met the young girl at a reception at the house of the second head of his department, and fell violently in love with her.

She was the daughter of a deceased provincial tax-collector. She and her mother came to live in Paris, where the latter made the acquaintance of families in her neighborhood and hoped to find a husband for her daughter. They were in moderate circumstances, and were honorable, gentle, and quiet.

The young girl was a perfect type of the virtuous woman to whom every sensible young man dreams of one day intrusting his happiness. Her simple beauty, her angelic modesty, and the hardly perceptible smile which hovered about her lips seemed to be the reflection of a lovely soul. Her praises resounded on every side. People never tired of saying: "Happy the man who wins her love! He could not find a better wife."

Monsieur Lantin, then chief clerk in the Depart-

ment of the Interior, who enjoyed the comfortable salary of three thousand five hundred francs, proposed to this model young girl, and was accepted.

He was unspeakably happy with her. She governed his household with economy and they seemed to live in luxury. She lavished the most delicate attentions on her husband, coaxed and fondled him; and so great was her charm that six years after their marriage Monsieur Lantin discovered that he loved his wife even more than in their honeymoon.

He disliked only two of her tastes: her love for the theater and her taste for imitation jewelry. Her friends (the wives of petty officials) frequently procured for her a box at the theater, often for a "first night"; and her husband was obliged to accompany her to these entertainments, which bored him excessively after his day's work at the office.

After a time, Monsieur Lantin begged his wife to request some lady of her acquaintance to accompany her and to bring her home after the theater. She opposed this arrangement, at first; but finally consented, to the great delight of her husband.

With her love for the theater, came also the desire for ornaments. Her costumes remained as before, simple, in good taste, and always modest; but she soon began to adorn her ears with huge rhinestones, which sparkled like real diamonds. Around her neck she wore strings of false pearls, on her arms bracelets of imitation gold, and in her hair combs set with glass jewels. Her hus-

band frequently remonstrated with her, saying:

"My dear, as you cannot afford to buy real jewelry, you ought to appear adorned only with your beauty and modesty, the rarest ornaments of your sex."

But she would smile sweetly, and say:

"What can I do? I am fond of jewelry; it is my only weakness. We cannot change our natures."

Then she would roll around her fingers the pearl necklace, make the facets of the crystal gems sparkle, and say:

"Look! are they not lovely? One would swear they were real."

Monsieur Lantin would then answer, smilingly:

"You have Bohemian tastes, my dear."

Sometimes, of an evening, when they were enjoying a *tête-à-tête* by the fireside, she would place on the tea-table the morocco leather box containing the "trash," as her husband called it. She would examine the false gems with a passionate attention, as if they imparted some deep and secret joy; and she often persisted in passing a necklace around his neck, and, laughing heartily, exclaimed: "How droll you look!" Then she would throw herself into his arms, and kiss him affectionately.

One evening, in winter, she had been to the opera, and returned home chilled through and through. The next morning she coughed, and eight days later she died of inflammation of the lungs.

Monsieur Lantin's despair was so great that his hair became white in one month. He wept unceasingly; his heart was broken as he remembered her smile, her voice, every charm of his dead wife.

Time did not assuage his grief. Often, in office hours, while his colleagues were discussing the topics of the day, his eyes would suddenly fill with tears, and he would give vent to his grief in heartrending sobs. Everything in his wife's room remained as it was during her lifetime; all her furniture, even her clothing, being left as it was on the day of her death. Here he was wont to seclude himself daily and think of her who had been his treasure, the joy of his existence.

But life soon became a struggle. His income, which, in the hands of his wife, covered all household expenses, was now no longer sufficient for his own immediate wants; and he wondered how she could have managed to buy such excellent wine and rare delicacies, which he could no longer procure with his modest resources.

He incurred some debts, and was soon reduced to absolute poverty. One morning, finding himself without a sou in his pocket, he resolved to sell something, and immediately the thought occurred to him of disposing of his wife's paste jewels, for he cherished in his heart a sort of rancor against these "deceptions," which had always irritated him. The very sight of them spoiled, somewhat, the memory of his lost darling.

To the last days of her life she had continued to make purchases, bringing home new gems almost every evening, and he turned them over some time before deciding to sell the heavy necklace, which she seemed to prefer, and which, he thought, ought to be worth six or seven francs; for it was of very fine workmanship, though only imitation.

He put it in his pocket, and set out in search of what seemed a reliable jeweler's shop. At last he found one, and went in, feeling a little ashamed to expose his misery, and also to offer such a worthless article for sale.

"Sir," said he to the merchant, "I should like to know what this is worth."

The man took the necklace, examined it, called his clerk, and made some remarks in an undertone; he then put the ornament back on the counter, and looked at it from a distance to judge the effect.

Monsieur Lantin, annoyed at all these ceremonies, was on the point of saying: "Oh! I know well enough it is not worth anything," when the jeweler said: "Sir, that necklace is worth from twelve to fifteen thousand francs; but I could not buy it unless you can tell me exactly where it came from."

The widower opened his eyes wide and remained gaping, not comprehending the merchant's meaning. Finally he stammered: "You say—are you sure?" The other replied, dryly: "You may apply elsewhere, and see whether any one will offer you

more. I consider it worth fifteen thousand at the most. Come back here, if you cannot do better."

Monsieur Lantin, beside himself with astonishment, took up the necklace and left the store. He wished time for reflection.

Once outside, he felt inclined to laugh, and said to himself: "The fool! Oh, the fool! Had I only taken him at his word! That jeweler cannot distinguish real diamonds from the imitation article."

A few minutes later, he entered another store, in the Rue de la Paix. As soon as the proprietor glanced at the necklace, he cried out:

"Ah, *parbleu!* I know it well; it was bought here."

Monsieur Lantin, greatly disturbed, asked:

"How much is it worth?"

"Well, I sold it for twenty thousand francs. I am willing to take it back for eighteen thousand, when you inform me, according to our legal formality, how it came to be in your possession."

This time, Monsieur Lantin was dumbfounded. He replied:

"But—examine it well. Until this moment I was under the impression that it was imitation."

The jeweler asked:

"What is your name, sir?"

"Lantin. I am in the employ of the Minister of the Interior. I live at number sixteen Rue des Martyrs."

The merchant looked through his books, found

the entry, and said: "That necklace was sent to Madame Lantin's address, sixteen Rue des Martyrs, July 20, 1876."

The two men looked into each other's eyes, the widower speechless with astonishment, the jeweler scenting a thief. The latter broke the silence.

"Will you leave this necklace here for twenty-four hours?" said he; "I will give you a receipt."

Monsieur Lantin answered hastily: "Yes, certainly." Then, putting the ticket into his pocket, he left the store.

He wandered aimlessly through the streets, his mind in a state of dreadful confusion. He tried to reason, to understand. His wife could not afford to purchase such a costly ornament. Certainly not. But, then, it must have been a present!—a present! —a present from whom? Why was it given to her?

He stopped, and remained standing in the middle of the street. A horrible doubt entered his mind. She? Then, all the other jewels must have been presents, too! The earth seemed to tremble beneath him; the tree before him to be falling; he threw up his arms, and fell to the ground, unconscious. He recovered his senses in a pharmacy into which the passers-by had borne him. He asked to be taken home, and, when he reached the house he shut himself up in his room and wept until nightfall. Finally, overcome with fatigue, he went to bed, and fell into a heavy sleep.

The sun awoke him next morning, and he began

to dress slowly to go to the office. It was hard to work after such an experience. He sent a letter to his employer, requesting to be excused. Then he remembered that he had to return to the jeweler's. He did not like the idea; but he could not leave the necklace with that man. He dressed and went out.

It was a lovely day; a clear blue sky smiled on the busy city. Men of leisure were strolling about with their hands in their pockets.

Monsieur Lantin, observing them, said to himself: "The rich, indeed, are happy. With money, it is possible to forget even the deepest sorrow. One can go where one pleases, and in travel find that distraction which is the surest cure for grief. Oh! if I were only rich!"

He was hungry, but his pocket was empty. He again remembered the necklace. Eighteen thousand francs! What a sum!

He soon arrived in the Rue de la Paix, opposite the jeweler's. Eighteen thousand francs! Twenty times he resolved to go in, but shame kept him back. He was hungry, however, very hungry, and not a sou in his pocket. He decided quickly, ran across the street, in order not to have time for reflection, and rushed into the store.

The proprietor immediately came forward, and politely offered him a chair; the clerks glanced at him knowingly.

"I have made inquiries, Monsieur Lantin," said

the jeweler, "and if you are still resolved to dispose of the gems, I am ready to pay you the price I offered."

"Certainly, sir," stammered Monsieur Lantin.

Whereupon the proprietor took from a drawer eighteen large bills, counted them and handed them to Monsieur Lantin, who signed a receipt, and, with trembling hand, put the money into his pocket.

As he was about to leave the store, he turned toward the merchant, who still wore the same knowing smile, and, lowering his eyes, said:

"I have—I have other gems, which came from the same source. Will you buy them, also?"

The merchant bowed: "Certainly, sir."

Monsieur Lantin said gravely: "I will bring them to you." An hour later he returned with the gems.

The large diamond earrings were worth twenty thousand francs; the bracelets, thirty-five thousand; the rings, sixteen thousand; a set of emeralds and sapphires, fourteen thousand; a gold chain with solitaire pendant, forty thousand—making the sum of one hundred and forty-three thousand francs.

The jeweler remarked, jestingly:

"There was a person who invested all her savings in precious stones."

Monsieur Lantin replied, seriously:

"It is only another way of investing one's money."

That day he lunched at Voisin's, and drank wine

worth twenty francs a bottle. Then he hired a carriage and made a tour of the Bois. He gazed at the various turnouts with a kind of disdain, and could hardly refrain from crying out to the occupants:

"I, too, am rich! I am worth two hundred thousand francs."

Suddenly he thought of his employer. He drove up to the bureau, and entered gayly, saying:

"Sir, I have come to resign my place. I have just inherited three hundred thousand francs."

He shook hands with his former colleagues, and confided to them some of his projects for the future; he then went out to dine at the Café Anglais.

He seated himself beside a gentleman of aristocratic bearing; and, during the meal, informed the latter confidentially that he had just inherited a fortune of four hundred thousand francs.

For the first time in his life, he was not bored at the theater, and he spent the remainder of the night in a gay frolic.

Six months afterward he married again. His second wife was a very virtuous woman; but had a violent temper, and caused him much sorrow.

THAT UMBRELLA!

MADAME OREILLE was economical; she knew the value of a centime, and had a whole storehouse of strict principles with regard to the multiplication of money, so that her cook found the greatest difficulty in making what the servants call their market-penny, and her husband was hardly allowed any pocket-money at all. They were very comfortably off, and had no children; but it really pained Madame Oreille to see money spent; it was like tearing at her heartstrings when she had to take any of those nice crown-pieces out of her pocket; and whenever she had to spend anything, no matter how necessary it might be, she slept badly the next night.

Oreille was continually saying to his wife:

"You really might be more liberal, as we have no children, and never spend our income."

"You don't know what may happen," she used to reply. "It is better to have too much than too little."

She was small, about forty, very active, rather hasty, wrinkled, very neat and tidy, and had a short temper.

Her husband frequently complained of the privations she made him endure; some of them were particularly painful to him, as they touched his vanity.

He was one of the head clerks in the War Office, and stayed on there only in obedience to his wife's wish to increase their income, which they did not nearly spend.

For two years he had always come to the office with the same old patched umbrella, to the great amusement of his fellow clerks. At last he got tired of their jokes, and insisted upon his wife's buying him a new one. She bought one for eight francs and a half, one of those cheap articles which large houses sell as an advertisement. When the men in the office saw the article, which was being sold in Paris by the thousand, they resumed their jokes, and Oreille had a dreadful time of it. They even made a song about it, which he heard from morning till night all over the immense building.

Oreille was very angry, and peremptorily told his wife to get him a new one, a good silk one, for twenty francs, and to bring him the bill, so that he might see that it was all right.

She bought him one for eighteen francs, and said, getting red with anger as she gave it to him:

"This will last you five years at least."

Oreille felt quite triumphant, and received a small ovation when he appeared at the office with his new acquisition.

When he went home in the evening his wife said to him, looking at the umbrella uneasily:

"You should not leave it fastened up with the elastic; it will be likely to cut the silk. You must take care of it, for I shall not buy you a new one in a hurry."

She took it, unfastened it, and then stood dumbfounded with astonishment and rage; in the middle of the silk there was a hole as big as a sixpenny-piece; it had been made with the end of a cigar.

"What is that?" she screamed.

Her husband replied quietly, without looking at it:

"What is it? What do you mean?"

She was choking with rage, and could hardly get out a word.

"You—you—have—burned—your new umbrella! Why—you must be—mad! Do you wish to ruin us outright?"

He turned round, and felt that he was growing pale.

"What are you talking about?"

"I say that you have burned your umbrella. Just look here!"

And rushing at him, as if she were going to beat him, she violently thrust the little circular burned hole under his nose.

He was utterly struck dumb at the sight of it and could only stammer out:

"What—what *is* it? How should I know? I have

done nothing, I will swear. I don't know what is the matter with the umbrella."

"You have been playing tricks with it at the office; you have been playing the fool and opening it, to show it off!" she screamed.

"I opened it only once, to let them see what a nice one it was; that is all, I swear."

But she shook with rage, and got up one of those conjugal scenes which make a peaceable man dread the domestic hearth more than a battlefield where bullets are flying.

She mended it with a piece of silk cut out of the old umbrella, which was of a different color, and the next day Oreille went off very humbly with the mended article in his hand. He put it into a cupboard, and dismissed it from his thoughts.

But he had scarcely got home that evening when his wife took the umbrella from him, opened it, and nearly had a fit when she saw what had befallen it, for the disaster was irreparable. It was covered with small holes which evidently proceeded from burns, just as if some one had emptied the ashes from a lighted pipe on to it. It was ruined utterly.

She looked at it without a word, too enraged to be able to say anything. He also, when he saw the damage, remained dumbfounded, in a state of frightened consternation.

They looked at each other, then he looked at the floor; and the next moment she threw the useless

article at his head, screaming out in a transport of the most violent rage, for she had recovered her voice by that time:

"Oh! you brute! you brute! You did it on purpose, but I will pay you out for it; you shall not have another."

And then the scene began again, and after the storm had raged for an hour, he at last was enabled to explain himself. He declared that he could not understand it at all, and that it could only proceed from malice or from vengeance.

A ring at the bell saved him; it was a friend whom they were expecting to dinner.

Madame Oreille stated the case to him. As for buying a new umbrella, that was out of the question; her husband should not have another.

The friend very sensibly said that in that case his clothes would be spoiled, and they were certainly worth more than the umbrella. But the little woman, who was still in a rage, replied:

"Very well, then, when it rains he may have the kitchen umbrella, for I will not give him a new silk one."

Oreille utterly rebelled at such an idea.

"All right," he said; "then I shall resign my post. I am not going to the office with the kitchen umbrella."

The friend interposed:

"Have this one re-covered; it will not cost much."

But Madame Oreille, being still in a rage, said:

"It will cost at least eight francs to re-cover it. Eight and eighteen are twenty-six. Just fancy, twenty-six francs for an umbrella! It is utter madness!"

The friend, who was only a poor man of the middle classes, had an inspiration:

"Make your fire insurance pay for it. The companies pay for all articles that are burned, as long as the damage has been done in your own house."

On hearing this advice the little woman calmed down immediately, and then, after a moment's reflection, she said to her husband:

"To-morrow, before going to your office, you will go to the Maternelle Insurance Company, show them the state your umbrella is in, and make them pay for the damage."

M. Oreille fairly jumped, he was so startled at the proposal.

"I would not do it for my life! It is eighteen francs lost, that is all. It would not ruin us."

The next morning he took a walking-stick when he went out, and, luckily, it was a fine day.

Left at home Madame Oreille could not get over the loss of her eighteen francs by any means. She had put the umbrella on the dining-room table, and she looked at it without being able to come to any determination.

Every moment she thought of the insurance company, but she did not dare to encounter the quizzical looks of the gentlemen who might receive her,

for she was very timid before people, blushed at a mere nothing, and was embarrassed when she had to speak to strangers.

But the regret at the loss of the eighteen francs still pained her. She tried not to think of it any more, and yet every moment the recollection of the loss struck her painfully. What was she to do? Time went on, and she could not decide; but suddenly, like all cowards, on making a resolve she became determined.

"I will go, and we shall see what will happen."

But first of all she was obliged to prepare the umbrella so that the disaster might be complete, and the reason of it quite evident. She took a match from the mantelpiece, and between the ribs she burned a hole as big as the palm of her hand; then she delicately rolled it up, fastened it with the elastic band, put on her bonnet and shawl, and went quickly toward the Rue de Rivoli, where the insurance office was.

But the nearer she got, the slower she walked. What was she going to say, and what reply would she get?

She looked at the numbers of the houses; there were still twenty-eight. That was all right, so she had time to consider, and she walked slower and slower. Suddenly she saw a door on which was a large brass plate with "La Maternelle Fire Insurance Office" engraved on it. Already! She waited a moment, for she felt nervous and almost ashamed;

then she walked past, came back, walked past again, and came back again.

At last she said to herself:

"I must go in, however, so I may as well do it sooner as later."

She could not help noticing, however, how her heart beat as she entered.

She went into an enormous room with grated wicket openings all round, and a man behind each of them, and as a gentleman carrying a handful of paper passed her, she stopped him and said timidly:

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, but can you tell me where I must apply for payment for anything that has been accidentally burned?"

He replied in a sonorous voice:

"The first door on the left; that is the department you want."

This frightened her still more, and she felt inclined to run away, to put in no claim, to sacrifice her eighteen francs. But the idea of that sum revived her courage, and she went upstairs, out of breath, stopping at almost every other step.

She knocked at a door which she saw on the first landing, and a clear voice said, in answer:

"Come in!"

She obeyed mechanically, and found herself in a large room where three solemn gentlemen, all with a decoration in their buttonholes, were talking.

One of them said: "What do you want, Madame?"

She could hardly get out her words, but stammered: "I have come—I have come on account of an accident, something——"

He very politely pointed out a seat to her.

"If you will kindly sit down I will attend to you in a moment."

And, returning to the other two, he continued:

"The company, gentlemen, does not consider that it is under any obligation to you for more than four hundred thousand francs, and we can pay no attention to your claim to the further sum of a hundred thousand, which you wish to make us pay. Besides that, the surveyor's valuation——"

One of the others interrupted him:

"That is enough, Monsieur, the law courts will decide between us, and we have nothing further to do than to take our leave." And they went out after mutual ceremonious bows.

Oh! if she could only have gone away with them, how gladly she would have done it; she would have run away and given up everything. But it was too late, for the gentleman came back, and said, bowing:

"What can I do for you, Madame?"

She could hardly speak, but at last she managed to say:

"I have come—for this."

The manager looked at the object which she held out to him in mute astonishment.

With trembling fingers she tried to undo the

elastic, and succeeding, after several attempts, she hastily opened the damaged remains of the umbrella.

"It looks to me to be in a very bad state of health," he said compassionately.

"It cost me twenty francs," she said, with some hesitation.

He seemed astonished. "Really! As much as that?"

"Yes, it was a capital article, and I wanted you to see the condition it is in. "

"Yes, yes, I see; very well. But I really do not understand what it can have to do with me."

She began to feel uncomfortable; perhaps this company did not pay for such small articles, and she said:

"But—it is burned."

He could not deny it.

"I see that very well," he replied.

She remained open-mouthed, not knowing what to say next; then, suddenly recollecting that she had left out the main thing, she said hastily:

"I am Madame Oreille; we are insured in La Maternelle, and I have come to claim the value of this damage.

"I only want you to have it re-covered," she added quickly, fearing a positive refusal.

The manager was rather embarrassed, and said:

"But, really, Madame, we do not sell umbrellas; we cannot undertake that kind of repairs."

The little woman felt her courage reviving; she was not going to give up without a struggle; she was not even afraid any more, and said:

"I only want you to pay me the cost of repairing it; I can easily get it done myself."

The gentleman seemed rather confused.

"Really, Madame, it is such a very small matter! We are never asked to give compensation for such trivial losses. You must allow that we cannot make good pocket-handkerchiefs, gloves, brooms, slippers, all the small articles which are every day exposed to the chances of being burned."

She got red in the face, and felt inclined to fly into a rage.

"But, Monsieur, last December one of our chimneys caught fire, and caused at least five hundred francs' damage; my husband made no claim on the company, and so it is only just that it should pay for my umbrella now."

The manager, guessing that she was telling a lie, said, with a smile:

"You must acknowledge, Madame, that it is surprising that Monsieur Oreille should have asked no compensation for damages amounting to five hundred francs, and should now claim five or six francs for mending an umbrella."

She was not the least put out, and replied:

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, the five hundred francs affected Monsieur Oreille's pocket; this damage, amounting to eighteen francs, concerns Ma-

dame Oreille's pocket, which is a totally different matter."

As he saw that he had no chance of getting rid of her, and that he would only be wasting his time, he said resignedly:

"Will you kindly tell me how the damage was done?"

She felt that she had won the victory, and said:

"This is how it happened, Monsieur: In our hall there is a bronze stick and umbrella stand, and the other day, when I came in, I put my umbrella into it. I must tell you that just above there is a shelf for the candlesticks and matches. I took three or four matches, and struck one, but it missed fire, so I struck another, which ignited, but went out immediately, and a third did the same."

The manager interrupted her to make a joke.

"I suppose they were government matches, then?"

She did not understand him, and continued:

"Very likely. At any rate, the fourth caught fire, and I lighted my candle, and went to my room to go to bed; but in a quarter of an hour I fancied that I smelled something burning, and I have always been terribly afraid of fire. If ever we have an accident it will not be my fault, I assure you. I am terribly nervous since our chimney was on fire, as I told you; so I got up, and hunted about everywhere, sniffing like a dog after game, and at last I noticed that my umbrella was burning. Most likely

a match had fallen between the folds and burned it. You can see how it has damaged it."

The manager had taken his cue, and asked her: "What do you estimate the damage at?"

She did not know what to say, as she was not certain what amount to put on it, but she replied: "Perhaps you had better get it done yourself. I will leave it to you."

He, however, naturally refused.

"No, Madame, I cannot do that. Tell me the amount of your claim, that is all I want to know."

"Well!—I think that—— Look here, Monsieur, I do not want to make any money out of you, so I will tell you what we will do. I will take my umbrella to the maker, who will re-cover it in good, durable silk, and I will bring the bill to you. Will that suit you, Monsieur?"

"Perfectly, Madame; we will settle it so. Here is a note for the cashier, who will repay you whatever it costs you."

He gave a paper to Madame Oreille, who took it, got up and went out, thanking him, for she was in haste to go lest he should change his mind.

She went briskly through the streets, looking out for a really good umbrella-maker, and when she found a shop which appeared to be a first-class one, she went in, and said, confidently:

"I want this umbrella re-covered in silk, a good silk. Use the very best and strongest you have; I don't mind what it costs."

THE CLOCK

MY old friend Dr. Bonnet (one may have friends older than oneself) had often invited me to spend some time with him at Riom, and as I did not know Auvergne, I made up my mind to visit him in the summer of 1876.

I arrived by the morning train, and the first person I saw on the platform was the doctor. He was dressed in a gray suit, and wore a soft, black, wide-brimmed, high-crowned felt hat, narrow at the top which hardly any one except an Auvergnat would wear, and which reminded me of a charcoal-burner. Dressed like that, the doctor had the appearance of an old young man, with his spare body under his thin coat, and his large head of white hair.

He embraced me with that evident pleasure which country people feel on meeting long-expected friends, and, stretching out his arm, he said proudly:

"This is Auvergne!" I saw nothing before me but a range of mountains, whose summits, which resembled truncated cones, must have been extinct volcanoes.

Pointing to the name of the station, he said:

"*Riom*, the fatherland of magistrates, the pride of the magistracy, which ought rather to be the fatherland of doctors."

"Why?" I asked.

"Why?" he replied with a laugh. "If you transpose the letters, you have the Latin word *mori*, to die. That is the reason I settled here, my young friend."

Delighted at his own joke, he carried me off, rubbing his hands.

As soon as I had taken a cup of coffee, he took me to see the town. I admired the druggist's house, and other noted houses, which were all black, but as pretty as bric-à-brac, with their sculptured stone façades. I admired the statue of the Virgin, patroness of butchers, and he told me an amusing story about this, which I will relate some other time. Then he said:

"I must beg you to excuse me for a few minutes while I go and see a patient, and then I will take you to Chatel-Guyon, so as to show you the general aspect of the town, and all the mountain chain of the Puy-de-Dôme, before luncheon. You can wait for me outside; I shall only go upstairs, and come down immediately."

He left me outside one of those old, gloomy, silent, melancholy houses which we see in the provinces, and this one appeared to look unusually sinister. I soon discovered the reason. The large

windows on the first floor were half boarded up with wooden shutters. The upper part of them alone could be opened, as if one had wished to prevent people locked up in that huge stone trunk from looking into the street.

When the doctor came down again, I told him how it had struck me, and he replied:

"You are quite right; the poor creature who is living there must never see what is going on outside. She is a madwoman, or rather an idiot, what you Normans would call a *Niente*. It is a miserable story, but a very singular pathological case at the same time. Shall I tell you?"

I asked him to do so, and he continued:

"Twenty years ago the owners of this house, who were my patients, had a daughter who was like all other girls, but I soon discovered that while her body became admirably developed, her intellect remained stationary.

"She began to walk very early, but she could not talk. At first I thought she was deaf, but I soon discovered that, although she heard perfectly, she did not understand anything that was said to her. Violent noises frightened her, without her understanding how they were caused.

"She grew up into a superb woman, but she was dumb, from absolute want of intellect. I tried all means to introduce a gleam of intelligence into her brain, but without success. I thought I noticed that she knew her nurse, though as soon as

she was weaned, she failed to recognize her mother. She never could pronounce that word which is the first that children utter and the last that soldiers murmur when they are dying on the field of battle. She sometimes tried to talk, but she produced only incoherent sounds.

"When the weather was fine, she laughed continually, and emitted low cries which were like the twittering of birds. When it rained she cried and moaned in a mournful, terrifying manner, which sounded like the howling of a dog when a death occurs in a house.

"She was fond of rolling on the grass, as young animals do, and of running about madly, and she used to clap her hands every morning when the sun shone into her room, and would jump out of bed and insist, by signs, on being dressed as quickly as possible, so that she might get out.

"She did not appear to distinguish between her mother and her nurse, or between her father and me, or between the coachman and the cook. I particularly liked her parents, who were very unhappy on her account, and I went to see them nearly every day. I dined with them frequently, which enabled me to remark that Bertha (they had named her Bertha) seemed to recognize the various dishes, and to prefer some to others. At that time she was twelve years old, but as fully formed in figure as a girl of eighteen, and taller than I was. Then the idea struck me of develop-

ing her greediness, and by this means trying to produce some slight powers of distinguishing in her mind, and to force her, by the diversity of flavors, if not to reason, at least to arrive at instinctive distinctions, which of themselves would constitute a kind of process that was necessary to thought. Afterward, by appealing to her passions, and carefully making use of those which could serve us, we might hope to obtain a reaction on her intellect, and by degrees increase the insensible action of her brain.

"One day I put two plates before her, one of soup, and the other of very sweet vanilla cream. I made her taste each of them successively, and then I let her choose for herself, and she ate the plate of cream. In a short time I made her very greedy, so greedy that it appeared as if her only idea was the desire for eating. She easily recognized the various dishes, stretched out her hands toward those that she liked, and grasped them eagerly, and she used to cry when they were taken from her. Then I thought I would try to teach her to come to the dining-room when the dinner-bell rang. It took a long time, but I succeeded at last. In her vacant intellect there was a fixed correlation between the sound and her taste, a correspondence between two senses, an appeal from one to the other, and consequently a sort of connection of ideas (if one can call that kind of instinctive hyphen between two organic functions an idea) and so I

carried my experiments further, and taught her, with much difficulty, to recognize meal-times by the clock.

"For a long time it was impossible to attract her attention to the hands, but I succeeded in making her remark the clockwork and the striking apparatus. The means I employed were very simple; I asked them not to have the bell rung for luncheon, and everybody got up and went into the dining-room when the little brass hammer struck twelve o'clock, but I found great difficulty in teaching her to count the strokes. She ran to the door each time she heard the clock strike, but by degrees she learned that the strokes had not all the same value as regarded meals, and she frequently fixed her eyes, guided by her ears, on the dial.

"When I noticed that I took care every day at twelve and at six o'clock to place my fingers on the figures twelve and six, as soon as the moment she was waiting for had arrived, and I soon noticed that she attentively followed the motion of the small brass hands, which I had often turned in her presence.

"She had understood! Perhaps I ought rather to say she had grasped the idea. I had succeeded in getting the knowledge, or, rather, the sensation, of time into her, just as is the case with carp, which certainly have no clocks, when they are fed every day exactly at the same time.

"When I had obtained that result all the clocks

and watches in the house occupied her attention almost exclusively. She spent her time in looking at them, in listening to them, and in waiting for meal-time, and once something very funny happened. The striking apparatus of a pretty little Louis XVI clock that hung at the head of her bed having got out of order, she noticed it. She sat for twenty minutes with her eyes on the hands, waiting for it to strike ten, but when the hand passed the figure she was astonished at not hearing anything; so stupefied was she, indeed, that she sat down, no doubt overwhelmed by a feeling of violent emotion such as attacks us in the face of some terrible catastrophe. And she had the wonderful patience to wait until eleven o'clock in order to see what would happen, and as she then heard nothing, she was suddenly either seized with a wild fit of rage at having been deceived and imposed upon by appearances, or else overcome by that fear which a frightened creature feels at some terrible mystery, and by the furious impatience of a passionate individual who meets with an obstacle; she took up the tongs from the fireplace and struck the clock so violently that she broke it to pieces.

"It was evident, therefore, that her brain did act and calculate, obscurely it is true, and within very restricted limits, for I could never succeed in making her distinguish persons as she distinguished the time; and to stir her intellect it was necessary to appeal to her passions, in the material sense of

the word, and we soon had another, and alas! a very terrible, proof of this!

"She had grown up into a splendid girl, a perfect type of a race, a sort of lovely and stupid Venus. She was sixteen, and I have rarely seen such perfection of form, such suppleness and such regular features. I said she was a Venus; yes, a fair, stout, vigorous Venus, with large, bright, vacant eyes which were as blue as the flowers of the flax plant; she had a large mouth with full lips, the mouth of a glutton, of a sensualist, a mouth made for kisses. One morning her father came into my consulting-room with a strange look on his face, and, sitting down without even replying to my greeting, he said:

" 'I want to speak to you about a very serious matter. Would it be possible—would it be possible for Bertha to marry?'

" 'Bertha to marry! Why, it is quite impossible!'

" 'Yes, I know, I know,' he replied very sadly. " 'But reflect, doctor. Don't you think—perhaps—we hoped—if she had children—it would be a great shock to her, but a great happiness, and—who knows whether maternity might not rouse her intellect.'

"I was in a state of great perplexity. He was right, and it was possible that such a new situation, and that wonderful instinct of maternity which beats in the hearts of the lower animals, as it does

in the heart of a woman, which makes the hen fly at a dog's jaw to defend her chickens, might bring about a revolution, an utter change in her vacant mind, and set the motionless mechanism of her thoughts into movement. And then, moreover, I immediately remembered a personal instance. Some years previously I had possessed a spaniel bitch that was so stupid that I could do nothing with her, but when she had had puppies she became, if not exactly intelligent, yet almost like many other dogs that have not been thoroughly broken.

"As soon as I foresaw the possibility of this the wish to get Bertha married grew in me, not so much out of friendship for her and her poor parents as from scientific curiosity. What would happen? It was a singular problem, and I said to her father:

" 'Perhaps you are right. You might make the attempt. But you will never find a man to consent to marry her.'

" 'I have found somebody,' he said, in a low voice.

"I was dumbfounded, and said: 'Somebody really suitable? Some one of your own rank and position in society?'

" 'Decidedly,' he replied.

" 'Oh! And may I ask his name?'

" 'I came on purpose to tell you, and to consult you. It is Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles.'

"I felt inclined to exclaim: 'What a wretch!'

but I held my tongue, and after a short silence, I said:

"'Oh! Very good. I see nothing against it.'

"The poor man shook me heartily by the hand.

"'She is to be married next month,' he said.

"Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles was a scapegrace of good family, who, after spending all that he had inherited from his father, and incurring debts by all kinds of doubtful means, had been trying to discover some other way of obtaining money, and he had discovered this method. He was a good-looking young fellow, and in capital health, but fast; one of that odious race of provincial fast men, and he appeared to me to be a sufficient sort of husband, who could be got rid of later by making him an allowance. He came to the house to pay his addresses and to strut about before the idiot girl, who seemed to please him. He brought her flowers, kissed her hands, sat at her feet, and looked at her with affectionate eyes; but she took no notice of any of his attentions, and did not make any distinction between him and the other persons who were about her.

"However, the marriage took place, and you may guess how my curiosity was aroused. I went to see Bertha the next day to discover if possible, from her looks whether any feelings had been awakened in her; but I found her just the same that she was every day, wholly taken up with the clock and dinner, while he, on the contrary, appeared really in

love, and tried to rouse his wife's spirits and affection by little endearments and such caresses as one bestows on a kitten. He could think of nothing better.

"I called upon the married couple pretty frequently, and I soon perceived that the young woman knew her husband, and gave him those eager looks which she had hitherto only bestowed on sweet dishes.

She followed his movements, knew his step on the stairs or in the neighboring rooms, clapped her hands when he came in, and her face was changed and brightened by the flames of profound happiness and of desire.

"She loved him with her whole body and with all her soul, to the very depths of her poor, weak spirit, and with all her heart, that poor heart of some grateful animal. It was really a delightful and innocent picture of simple passion, of carnal and yet modest passion, such as nature had implanted in mankind before man had complicated and disfigured it by all the various shades of sentiment. But he soon grew tired of this ardent, beautiful, dumb creature, and did not spend more than an hour a day with her, thinking it sufficient if he came home at night, and she began to suffer in consequence. She used to wait for him from morning till night, with her eyes on the clock; she did not even look at mealtime now, for he took all his meals away from home, Clermont, Chatel-Guyon,

no matter where, so long as he was not obliged to come home.

"She began to grow thin; every other thought, every other wish, every other expectation, and every confused hope disappeared from her mind, and the hours during which she did not see him became hours of terrible suffering. Soon he ceased to come home regularly at night; he spent the nights with women at the casino at Royal and did not come home until daybreak. But she never went to bed before he returned. She remained sitting motionless in an easy-chair, with her eyes fixed on the hands of the clock, which turned slowly and regularly round the china face on which the hours were painted.

She heard the trot of his horse in the distance, and sat up with a start, and when he came into the room she got up with the movements of an automaton and pointed to the clock, as if to say: 'See how late it is!'

"And he began to be afraid of this amorous and jealous half-witted woman, and flew into a rage, as brutes do; and one night he even went so far as to strike her, so they sent for me. When I arrived she was writhing and screaming in a terrible crisis of pain, anger, passion, how do I know what? Can one tell what goes on in such undeveloped brains?

"I calmed her by subcutaneous injections of morphine, and forbade her to see that man again, for I saw clearly that marriage would kill her by degrees.

"Then she went mad! Yes, my dear friend, that idiot has gone mad. She is always thinking of him and waiting for him; she waits for him day and night, awake or asleep, at this very moment, ceaselessly. When I saw her getting thinner and thinner, and as she persisted in never taking her eyes off the clocks, I had them removed from the house. I thus made it impossible for her to count the hours, and she tries to remember, from her vague reminiscences, at what time he used to come home formerly. I hope to destroy the recollection of it in time, and to extinguish that ray of thought which I kindled with so much difficulty.

"The other day I made an experiment. I offered her my watch; she took it and looked at it for some time; then she began to scream terribly, as if the sight of that little object had suddenly aroused her recollection, which was beginning to grow more distinct. She is pitiably thin now, with hollow and glittering eyes, and she walks up and down ceaselessly, like a wild beast in its cage; I have had bars put to the windows, and have had the seats fixed to the floor so as to prevent her from looking to see whether he is coming.

"Oh! her poor parents! What a life they must lead!"

We were now at the top of the hill, and the doctor turned round and said to me:

"Look at Riom from here."

The gloomy town looked like some ancient city.

Behind it a green, wooded plain studded with towns and villages, and bathed in a soft blue haze, extended until it was lost in the distance. Far away, on my right, was a range of lofty mountains, some with round summits, some cut off flat, as if with a sword, and the doctor began to enumerate the villages, towns, and hills, and to give me the history of all of them. But I did not listen to him; I was thinking of nothing but the mad woman, and I saw her only. She seemed to be hovering over that vast extent of country like a mournful ghost, and I asked him abruptly:

"What has become of the husband?"

My friend seemed rather surprised, but after a few moments' hesitation, he replied:

"He is living at Royat, on an allowance that they made him, and is quite happy; he leads a very fast life."

As we were slowly going back, an English dog-cart, drawn by a thoroughbred horse passed us rapidly. The doctor took me by the arm:

"There he is," he said.

I saw nothing but a gray felt hat, cocked over one ear, above a pair of broad shoulders, driving off in a cloud of dust.

THE DOWRY

THE marriage of Maître Simon Lebrument with Mademoiselle Jeanne Cordier was a surprise to no one. When Maître Lebrument bought out the practice of Maître Papillon, he needed money to pay for it; and Mademoiselle Jeanne Cordier had three hundred thousand francs clear in currency and in bonds.

Maître Lebrument was handsome and stylish, although in a provincial way; nevertheless, he was stylish, a rare thing at Boutigny-le-Rebours.

Mademoiselle Cordier was graceful and fresh-looking, though a little awkward; but she was a handsome girl, and one to be desired.

The marriage ceremony turned Boutigny topsy-turvy. Everybody admired the young couple, who quickly returned home to domestic felicity, having made simply a short trip to Paris, after a few days of close intimacy.

This *tête-à-tête* was delightful. Maître Lebrument had shown just the proper amount of delicacy. He had taken as his motto: "All things

come round to him who waits." He knew how to be at once patient and energetic, and his success was rapid and complete.

After four days, Madame Lebrument adored her husband. She could not get along without him, she must have him near her all the time, to caress and kiss him, to run her hands through his hair and beard, to play with his hands and nose. She would sit on his knees, and taking him by the ears would say: "Open your mouth and shut your eyes." He would open his mouth wide and partly close his eyes, and he would try to nip her fingers as she slipped some dainty between his teeth. Then she would give him a kiss, sweet and long, which would make chills run up and down his spine. And then, in his turn, he would not have enough caresses, enough lips, enough hands, enough of himself to please his wife from morning to night and from night to morning.

When the first week was over, he said to her:

"If you wish, we will leave for Paris next Tuesday. We will be like two lovers who are not married; we will go to the restaurants, the theaters, the concert halls, everywhere!"

She was ready to dance for joy.

"Oh! yes, yes. Let us go as soon as possible."

He continued:

"And then, as we must forget nothing, ask your father to hold your dowry in readiness; I shall pay Maître Papillon on this trip."

"All right!" she answered. "I will tell him tomorrow morning."

And he took her in his arms once more, to renew those sweet games of love which she had so enjoyed in the past week.

The following Tuesday, father-in-law and mother-in-law went to the station with their daughter and their son-in-law, who were leaving for the capital.

The father-in-law said:

"I tell you it is very imprudent to carry so much money around in a pocketbook." And the young lawyer smiled.

"Don't worry; I am accustomed to such things. You understand that, in my profession, I sometimes have as much as a million about me. In this manner, at least, we avoid a great amount of red tape and delays. You needn't worry."

The conductor cried: "All aboard for Paris!"

They scrambled into a car where two old ladies were already seated.

Lebrument whispered in his wife's ear:

"What a bother! I shall not be able to smoke."

She answered in a low voice:

"It annoys me, too, but not on account of your cigar."

The whistle blew, and the train started. The trip lasted about an hour, during which time they did not say much to each other, as the two old ladies did not go to sleep.

As soon as they were in front of the Saint-Lazare Station, Maître Lebrument said:

"Dearie, let us first go over to the Boulevard and get something to eat; then we can quietly return and get our trunk and bring it to the hotel."

She immediately assented.

"Oh, yes! Let us eat at the restaurant. Is it far?"

He answered:

"Yes, it's quite a distance, but we will take the omnibus."

She was surprised.

"Why don't we take a cab?"

He began to scold her smilingly:

"Is that the way you save money? A cab for a five minutes' ride at six cents a minute! You would deprive yourself of nothing."

"That is true," she said, a little embarrassed.

A large omnibus was passing by, drawn by three big horses, which were trotting. Lebrument called out:

"Conductor! Conductor!"

The heavy carriage stopped. And the young lawyer, pushing his wife, said to her quickly:

"Go inside; I'm going up on top, so that I may smoke at least one cigarette before luncheon."

She had no time to answer. The conductor, who had seized her by the arm to help her up the step, pushed her inside, and she fell into a seat, bewildered, looking through the back window at the feet

of her husband as he climbed up to the top of the vehicle.

And she sat there motionless, between a fat man odorous of cheap tobacco and an old woman odorous of garlic.

All the other passengers were lined up in silence—a grocer's boy, a young girl, a soldier, a gentleman with gold-rimmed spectacles and a large silk hat, two ladies with a self-satisfied and crabbed look, which seemed to say: "We are riding in this thing, but we don't *have* to," two sisters of charity, and an undertaker. They looked like a collection of caricatures.

The jolting of the carriage made them wag their heads, and the shaking of the wheels seemed to deaden them. They all looked as if they were asleep.

The young woman remained motionless. "Why didn't he come inside with me?" she was saying to herself. An unaccountable sadness seemed to be hanging over her. He really need not have acted so.

The sisters motioned to the conductor to stop, and they got off one after the other, leaving in their wake the pungent smell of camphor. The car started up, and soon stopped again. And in got a cook, red-faced and out of breath. She sat down, and placed her basket of provisions on her knees. A strong odor of dishwater filled the vehicle.

"It's farther than I imagined," thought Jeanne.

The undertaker went out, and was replaced by a coachman, who seemed to bring the atmosphere of the stable with him. The young girl had as a successor a messenger whose feet exhaled the odor of his errands.

The lawyer's wife began to feel ill at ease, nauseated, ready to cry without knowing why.

Other persons left, and others entered. The coach went on through interminable streets, stopping at stations and starting again.

"How far it is!" thought Jeanne. "I hope he hasn't gone to sleep! He has been so tired the last few days."

Little by little all the passengers left. She was left alone.

The conductor cried:

"Vaugirard!"

Seeing that she did not move, he repeated:

"Vaugirard!"

She looked at him, understanding that he was speaking to her, as no one else was there. For the third time the man said:

"Vaugirard!"

Then she asked:

"Where are we?"

He answered gruffly:

"We're at Vaugirard, of course! I have been yelling it for the last half-hour!"

"Is it far from the Boulevard?" she said.

"Which boulevard?"

"The Boulevard des Italiens."

"We passed that a long time ago!"

"Would you mind telling my husband?"

"Your husband? Where is he?"

"On the top of the 'bus."

"On the top! There hasn't been anybody there for a long time."

She started, terrified.

"What? That's impossible! He got on with me. Look well! He must be there."

The conductor was becoming uncivil.

"Come on, little one, you've talked enough! You can find ten men for every one that you lose. Now run along. You'll find another in the street."

Tears were coming to her eyes. She insisted:

"But, Monsieur, you are mistaken; I assure you that you must be mistaken. He had a big portfolio under his arm."

The man began to laugh.

"A big portfolio! Oh! Yes! He got off at the Madeleine. He got rid of you, all right! Ha! ha! ha!"

The stage had stopped. She got out and, in spite of herself, she looked up to the roof of the 'bus. It was absolutely deserted.

Then she began to cry, and, without thinking that anybody was listening or watching her, she said aloud:

"What is to become of me?"

An inspector approached.

"What's the matter?"

The conductor answered, in a bantering tone:

"It's a lady who got left by her husband during the trip."

The other continued:

"Oh! that's nothing. You go about your business."

Then he turned on his heels and walked away.

She began to walk straight ahead, too bewildered, too crazed even to understand what had happened to her. Where was she to go? What could she do? What could have happened to him? How could he have made such a mistake? How could he have been so forgetful?

She had two francs in her pocket. To whom could she go? Suddenly she remembered her cousin Barral, one of the assistants in the Navy Department.

She had just enough to pay for a cab. She drove to his house. He met her as he was leaving for his office. He was carrying a large portfolio under his arm, just like Lebrument.

She jumped out of the carriage.

"Henri!" she cried.

He stopped, astonished.

"Jeanne! Here—all alone? What are you doing? Where have you come from?"

Her eyes were full of tears as she stammered:

"My husband has just got lost!"

"Lost! Where?"

"On an omnibus."

"On an omnibus?"

Weeping, she told him her whole adventure.

He listened, thought, and then asked:

"Was he calm this morning?"

"Yes."

"Good. Did he have much money with him?"

"Yes, he was carrying my dowry."

"Your dowry! The whole of it?"

"The whole of it, in order to pay for the practice which he bought."

"Well, my dear cousin, by this time your husband must be well on his way to Belgium."

She could not understand. She kept repeating:

"My husband—you say——"

"I say that he has disapeared with your—your capital—that's all!"

She stood there sobbing.

"Then he is—he is—he is a villain!"

And, faint from excitement, she leaned her head on her cousin's shoulder and wept.

As people were stopping to look at them, he pushed her gently into the vestibule of his house, and, passing his arm around her waist, he led her up the stairs, and as his astonished servant opened the door, he ordered:

"Sophie, run to the restaurant and get a luncheon for two. I am not going to the office to-day."

THE LANCER'S WIFE

THE affair occurred after Bourbaki's defeat in Eastern France. The army, broken up, decimated, and exhausted, had been obliged to retreat into Switzerland after that terrible campaign, only the short duration of which saved a hundred and fifty thousand men from certain death. Hunger, the terrible cold, forced marches in the snow without boots, over bad mountain roads, had caused us *francs-tireurs,* especially, the greatest suffering, for we had no tents, and were almost without food, always in the van when we were marching toward Belfort, and in the rear when returning by the Jura. Of our little band, which had numbered twelve hundred men on the first of January, only twenty-two pale, thin, ragged wretches remained, when we at last succeeded in reaching Swiss territory.

There we were safe, and could rest. Everybody knows what sympathy was shown to the unfortunate French army, and how well it was cared for. We all gained fresh life, and those who had been

rich and happy before the war declared that they never had experienced a greater feeling of comfort than at that time. Think of it! We actually had something to eat every day, and could sleep every night.

Meanwhile, the war continued in Eastern France, which had been excluded from the armistice. Besançon still held the enemy in check, and the latter had their revenge by ravaging Franche Comté. Sometimes we heard that they had approached close to the frontier, and we saw Swiss troops, who were to form a line of observation between us and them, set out on their march.

That exasperated us in the end, and, as we regained health and strength, the longing to fight took possession of us. It was disgraceful and irritating to know that within two or three leagues of us the Germans were victorious and insolent, to know that we were protected by our captivity, and to feel that on that account we were powerless against them.

One day our Captain took five or six of us aside, and spoke to us about it, long and furiously. He was a fine fellow, that captain. He had been a sub-lieutenant in the zouaves, was tall and thin and as hard as steel, and during the whole campaign he had made things lively for the Germans. He fretted in inactivity, and could not accustom himself to the idea of being an idle prisoner.

"Hang it!" he said to us, "does it not enrage you to know that there is a number of uhlans

within two hours of us? Does it not almost drive you mad to know that those beggarly wretches are walking about as masters in our mountains, when six determined men might kill a whole spitful any day? I cannot endure it any longer, and I must go there."

"But how can you manage it, Captain?"

"How? It is not very difficult! Just as if we had not done some risky things within the last six months, and got out of woods that were guarded by very different men from the Swiss. The day that you wish to cross over into France, I will undertake to get you there."

"That may be; but what shall we do in France without any arms?"

"Without arms? We will get them over yonder, by heaven!"

"You are forgetting the treaty," another soldier said; "we shall run the risk of doing the Swiss an injury, if Manteuffel learns that they have allowed prisoners to return to France."

"Come," said the Captain, "those are all bad reasons. I mean to go and kill some Prussians; that is all I care about. If you do not wish to do as I do, very well; only say so at once. I can go by myself; I do not need anybody's company."

Naturally we all protested, and, as it was quite impossible to make the Captain change his mind, we felt obliged to promise to go with him. We liked him too much to leave him in the lurch, as he never

failed us in any extremity; and so the expedition was decided on.

The Captain had a plan of his own that he had been cogitating over for some time. A man in that part of the country whom he knew was willing to lend him a cart and six suits of peasants' clothes. We could hide under some straw at the bottom of the wagon, which would be loaded with Gruyère cheese, which he was supposed to be going to sell in France. The Captain told the sentinels that he was taking two friends with him to protect his goods, in case anyone should try to rob him, which did not seem an extraordinary precaution. A Swiss officer seemed to look at the wagon in a knowing manner, but that was in order to impress his soldiers. In a word, neither officers nor men could see anything amiss.

"Get along," the Captain said to the horses, as he cracked his whip, while our three men quietly smoked their pipes. I was half suffocated in my box, which admitted the air only through some holes in front, and at the same time I was nearly frozen, for it was bitterly cold.

"Get up," the Captain said again, and the wagon loaded with Gruyère cheese entered France.

The Prussian lines were very badly guarded, as the enemy trusted to the watchfulness of the Swiss. The sergeant spoke North German, while our Captain spoke the bad German of the Four Cantons, and so they could not understand each other. The

sergeant, however, pretended to be very intelligent; and, in order to make us believe that he understood us, they allowed us to continue our journey; and, after traveling for seven hours, being continually stopped in the same way, at nightfall we arrived at a small village of the Jura, in ruins.

What were we about to do? Our only arms were the Captain's whip, our uniforms, the peasants' blouses, and our food the Gruyère cheese. Our sole wealth consisted in our ammunition, packages of cartridges which we had stowed away inside some of the huge cheeses. We had about a thousand of them, just two hundred each, but we needed rifles, and they must be *chassepôts*. Luckily, however, the Captain was a bold man of an inventive mind, and this was the plan that he proposed:

While three of us remained hidden in a cellar in the abandoned village, he continued his journey as far as Besançon with the empty wagon and one man. The town was invested, but one can always make one's way into a town among the hills by crossing the tableland till within about ten miles of the walls, and then following paths and ravines on foot. They left their wagon at Omans, among the Germans, and escaped out of it at night on foot, so as to gain the heights which border the River Doubs; the next day they entered Besançon, where there were plenty of *chassepôts*. There were nearly forty thousand of them left in the arsenal, and General Roland, a brave marine, laughed at the Captain's

daring project, but let him have six rifles and wished him good luck. There he had also found his wife, who had been through all the war with us before the campaign in the East, and who had been only prevented by illness from continuing with Bourbaki's army. She had recovered, however, in spite of the cold, which was growing more and more intense, and in spite of the numberless privations that awaited her, she persisted in accompanying her husband. He was obliged to yield to her, and all three, the Captain, his wife, and our comrade, set out on their expedition.

To go there was nothing in comparison to returning. They were obliged to travel by night, to avoid meeting anybody, as the possession of six rifles would have made them liable to suspicion. But, in spite of everything, a week after leaving us, the Captain and his two men were back with us again. The campaign was about to begin.

On the first night of his arrival he began it himself, and, under the pretext of examining the surrounding country, he went along the highroad.

I must tell you that the little village which served as our fortress was a small collection of poor, badly built houses, which had been deserted long before. It lay on a steep slope, which terminated in a wooded plain. The country people sell the wood; they send it down the slopes, which are locally called *coulées,* and which lead down to the plain, and there they stack it into piles, which they

sell three times a year to the wood-merchant. The spot where this market is held is indicated by two small houses beside the highway, which serve for public houses. The Captain had gone down there by way of one of these *coulées*.

He had been gone about half an hour, and we were on the lookout at the top of the ravine, when we heard a shot. The Captain had ordered us not to stir, and to come to him only when we heard him blow his trumpet. It was made of a goat's horn, and could be heard a league off; but it gave no sound, and, in spite of our cruel anxiety, we were obliged to wait in silence, with our rifles by our side.

It is nothing to go down these *coulées;* one just lets oneself slide; but it is more difficult to get up again; one has to scramble up by catching hold of the hanging branches of the trees, and sometimes on all fours, by main strength. A whole hour passed, and he did not come; nothing moved in the brushwood. The Captain's wife began to grow impatient. What could he be doing? Why did he not call us? Did the shot that we had heard proceed from an enemy, and had he killed or wounded our leader, her husband? They did not know what to think, but I myself fancied either that he was dead or that his enterprise was successful; and I was merely anxious and curious to know what he had done.

Suddenly we heard the sound of his trumpet, and

we were much surprised that instead of coming from below, as we had expected, it came from the village behind us. What did that mean? It was a mystery to us, but the same idea struck us all, that he had been killed, and that the Prussians were blowing the trumpet to draw us into an ambush. We therefore returned to the cottage, keeping a careful lookout, with our fingers on the trigger, and hiding under the branches; but his wife, in spite of our entreaties, rushed on, leaping like a tigress. She thought that she had to avenge her husband, and had fixed the bayonet to her rifle, and we lost sight of her at that moment that we heard the trumpet again. A few moments later, we heard her calling out to us:

"Come on! come on! He is alive! It is he!"

We hastened on, and saw the Captain smoking his pipe at the entrance of the village, but strangely enough he was on horseback.

"Ah!" he said, "you see that there is something to be done here. Here I am on horseback already; I knocked over an uhlan yonder, and took his horse; I suppose they were guarding the wood, but it was by drinking and eating in clover. One of them, the sentry at the door, had not time to see me before I gave him a sugarplum in his stomach, and then, before the others could come out, I jumped on the horse and was off like a shot. Eight or ten of them followed me, I think; but I took the cross-roads through the woods. I have got scratched and

torn a bit, but here I am, and now, my good fellows, attention, and take care! Those brigands will not rest until they have caught us, and we must receive them with rifle bullets. Come on; let us take up our posts!"

We set out. One of us took up his position a good way from the village of the crossroads; I was posted at the entrance of the main street, where the road from the level country enters the village, while the two others, the Captain and his wife, were in the middle of the village, near the church, whose tower served for an observatory and a citadel.

We had not been in our places long before we heard a shot, followed by another, and then two, then three. The first was evidently a *chassepôt*—one recognized it by the sharp report, which sounds like the crack of a whip—while the other three came from the lancers' carbines.

The Captain was furious. He had given orders to the outpost to let the enemy pass and merely to follow them at a distance if they marched toward the village, and to join me when they had gone well between the houses. Then they were to appear suddenly, take the patrol beween two fires, and not allow a single man to escape; for, posted as we were, the six of us could have hemmed in ten Prussians, if needful.

"That confounded Piédelot has roused them," the Captain said, "and they will not venture to come on blindfolded any longer. I am quite sure

that he has managed to get a shot into himself somewhere or other, for we hear nothing of him. It serves him right; why did he not obey orders?" And then, after a moment, he grumbled in his beard: "After all, I am sorry for the poor fellow; he is so brave, and shoots so well!"

The Captain was right. We waited until evening, without seeing the uhlans; they had rctreated after the first attack; but unfortunately we had not seen Piédelot, either. Was he dead or a prisoner? When night came, the captain proposed that we should go out and look for him, and so the three of us started. At the crossroads we found a broken rifle and some blood, while the ground was trampled down; but we did not find either a wounded man or a dead body, although we searched every thicket, and at midnight we returned without having discovered anything of our unfortunate comrade.

"It is very strange," the Captain growled. "They must have killed him and thrown him into the bushes somewhere; they cannot possibly have taken him prisoner, as he would have called out for help. I cannot understand it all." Just as he said that, bright red flames shot up in the direction of the inn on the highroad, which illuminated the sky.

"Rascals! cowards!" he shouted. "I will bet that they have set fire to the two houses in the marketplace, in order to have their revenge, and then they will scuttle off without saying a word. They will be satisfied with having killed a man and

set fire to two houses. But it shall not pass over like that. We must go for them; they will not like to leave their illuminations in order to fight."

"It would be a great stroke of luck if we could set Piédelot free at the same time," some one said.

The five of us set off, full of rage and hope. In twenty minutes we had reached the bottom of the *coulée,* and had not yet seen anyone when we were within a hundred yards of the inn. The fire was behind the house, and all we saw of it was the reflection above the roof. However, we were walking rather slowly, as we were afraid of an ambush, when suddenly we heard Piédelot's well-known voice. It had a strange sound, however; for it was at the same time dull and vibrating, stifled and clear, as if he were calling out as loud as he could with a rag stuffed into his mouth. He seemed to be hoarse and panting, and the unlucky fellow kept exclaiming: "Help! Help!"

We sent all thought of prudence to the devil, and in two bounds we were at the back of the inn, where a terrible sight met our eyes.

Piédelot was being burned alive. He was writhing in the midst of a heap of fagots, tied to a stake, and the flames were lapping him with their burning tongues. When he saw us, his tongue seemed to stick in his throat; he drooped his head, and seemed as if he were about to die. It was only the affair of a moment to upset the burning pile, to scatter the embers, and to cut the ropes that fastened him.

Poor fellow, in what a terrible state we found him! The evening before he had had his left arm broken, and it seemed as if he had been badly beaten since then, for his whole body was covered with wounds, bruises, and blood. The flames had also begun their work on him, and he had two large burns, one on his loins and the other on his right thigh, and his beard and hair were scorched. Poor Piédelot!

No one knows the terrible rage we felt at this sight! We would have rushed headlong at a hundred thousand Prussians; our thirst for vengeance was intense. But the cowards had run away, leaving their crime behind them. Where could we find them now? Meanwhile, however, the Captain's wife was looking after Piédelot, and dressing his wounds as best she could, while the Captain himself shook hands with him excitedly, and in a few minutes he recovered himself.

"Good morning, Captain; good morning, all of you," he said. "Ah! the scoundrels, the wretches! Why, twenty of them came to surprise us."

"Twenty, do you say?"

"Yes; there was a whole band of them, and that is why I disobeyed orders, Captain, and fired on them, for they would have killed you all, and I preferred to stop them. That frightened them, and they did not venture to go farther than the cross-roads. They were such cowards. Four of them shot at me at twenty yards, as if I had been a tar-

get, and then they slashed me with their swords. My arm was broken, so that I could only use my bayonet with one hand."

"But why did you not call for help?"

"I took good care not to do that, for you would all have come; and you would neither have been able to defend me nor yourselves, being only five against twenty."

"You know that we should not have allowed you to be taken, poor old fellow."

"I preferred to die by myself. I did not want to bring you there, for it would have been a mere ambush."

"Well, we will not talk about it any more. Do you feel rather easier?"

"No, I am suffocating. I know that I cannot live much longer. The brutes! They tied me to a tree, and beat me till I was half dead, and then they shook my broken arm; but I did not make a sound. I would rather have bitten my tongue out than have cried out before them. . . . Now I can tell what I am suffering and shed tears; it does one good. Thank you, my kind friends."

"Poor Piédelot! But we will avenge you, you may be sure!"

"Yes, yes; I want you to do that. There is, in particular, a woman among them who passes as the wife of the lancer whom the captain killed yesterday. She is dressed like a lancer, and she tortured me the most yesterday, and suggested burning me;

and it was she who set fire to the wood. Oh! the wretch, the beast. . . . Ah! how I suffer! My loins, my arms!" and he fell back panting and exhausted, writhing in his terrible agony, while the captain's wife wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and we all shed tears of grief and rage, as if we had been children. I will not describe the end; he died half an hour later, previously telling us in which direction the enemy had gone. When he was dead we gave ourselves time to bury him, and then we set out in pursuit of them, with our hearts full of fury and hatred.

"We will throw ourselves on the whole Prussian army, if it be necessary," the Captain said; "but we will avenge Piédelot. We must catch those scoundrels. Let us swear to die, rather than not to find them; and if I am killed first, these are my orders: All the prisoners that you take are to be shot immediately, and as for the lancer's wife, she is to be tortured before she is put to death."

"She must not be shot, because she is a woman," the Captain's wife said. "If you survive, I am sure that you would not shoot a woman. Torturing her will be quite sufficient; but if you are killed in this pursuit, I ask one thing, and that is to fight with her; I will kill her with my own hands, and the others can do what they like with her if she kills me."

"We will dishonor her! We will burn her! We will tear her to pieces! Piédelot shall be avenged!

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!"

Next morning we unexpectedly fell on an outpost of uhlans four leagues away. Surprised by our sudden attack, they were not able to mount their horses, nor even to defend themselves; and in a few moments we had five prisoners, corresponding to our own number. The Captain questioned them, and from their answers we felt sure that they were the same whom we had encountered the day before. Then a very curious operation took place. One of us was told off to ascertain their sex, and nothing can describe our joy when we discovered what we were seeking among them, the female executioner who had tortured our friend.

The four men were shot on the spot, with their backs to us and close to the muzzles of our rifles; and then we turned our attention to the woman. What were we going to do with her? I must acknowledge that we were all in favor of shooting her. Hatred, and the wish to avenge Piédelot, had extinguished all pity in us, and we had forgotten that we wished to shoot a woman, but a woman reminded us of it, the Captain's wife; at her entreaties, therefore, we determined to hold her a prisoner.

The Captain's poor wife was to be severely punished for this act of clemency.

The next day we heard that the armistice had been extended to the eastern part of France, and we had to put an end to our little campaign. Two

of us, who belonged to the neighborhood, returned home, so there were only four of us, all told: the captain, his wife, and two men. We belonged to Besançon, which was still being besieged in spite of the armistice.

"Let us stop here," said the captain. "I cannot believe that the war is to end like this. The devil take it! Surely there are men still left in France; and now is the time to prove what they are made of. The spring is coming on, and the armistice is only a trap laid for the Prussians. During the time that it lasts, a new army will be raised, and some fine morning we shall fall upon them again. We shall be ready, and we have a hostage—let us remain here."

We fixed our quarters there. It was terribly cold, and we did not go out much, and somebody had always to keep the female prisoner in sight.

She was sullen, and never said anything, or else spoke of her husband, whom the Captain had killed. She looked at him continually with fierce eyes, and we felt that she was tormented by a wild longing for revenge. That seemed to us to be the most suitable punishment for the terrible torments that she had made Piédelot suffer, for impotent desire for vengeance is such intense pain!

Alas! we who know how to avenge our comrade should have known that this woman would know how to avenge her husband, and should have been on our guard. It is true that one of us kept watch

every night, and that at first we tied her by a long rope to the great oak bench that was fastened to the wall. But, by and by, as she never tried to escape, in spite of her hatred for us, we relaxed our extreme prudence, and allowed her to sleep somewhere else except on the bench, and without being tied. What had we to fear? She was at the end of the room, a man was on guard at the door, and between her and the sentinel the Captain's wife and two other men used to lie. She was alone and unarmed against four, so there could be no danger.

One night when we were asleep, and the Captain was on guard, the lancer's wife was lying more quietly in her corner than usual, and she had even smiled during the evening, for the first time since she had been our prisoner. Suddenly, however, in the middle of the night, we were all awakened by a terrible cry. We got up, groping about, and at once stumbled over a furious couple who were rolling about and fighting on the ground. It was the Captain and the lancer's wife. We threw ourselves on them, and separated them in a moment. She was shouting and laughing, and he seemed to be uttering the death rattle. All this took place in the dark. Two of us held her, and when a light was struck a terrible sight met our eyes. The captain was lying on the floor in a pool of blood, with an enormous gash in his throat, and his bayonet, which had been taken from his rifle, was sticking in the red, gaping wound. A few minutes afterward

he died, without having been able to utter a word.

His wife did not shed a tear. Her eyes were dry, her throat was contracted, and she looked at the lancer's wife steadfastly and ferociously.

"This woman belongs to me," she said to us suddenly. "You swore to me not a week ago to let me kill her as I chose, if she should kill my husband; and you must keep your oath. You must fasten her securely to the fireplace, upright against the back of it, and then you can go where you like, but far from here. I will take my revenge on her myself. Leave the Captain's body, and we three, he, she, and I, will remain here."

We obeyed, and left her. She promised to write to us at Geneva.

Two days later I received the following letter, dated the day after we had left; it had been written at an inn on the highroad:

"My Friend: I am writing to you, according to my promise. For the moment I am at the inn, where I have just handed my prisoner over to a Prussian officer.

"I must tell you, my friend, that this poor woman has left two children in Germany. She had followed her husband, whom she adored, as she did not wish him to be exposed to the risks of war by himself, and as her children were with their grandparents. I have learned all this since yesterday, and it has turned my ideas of vengeance into more humane feelings. At the very moment when I felt pleasure in insulting this woman, and in threatening her with the most fearful torments, in recalling Piédelot, who had been burned alive, and in threatening her with a similar death, she looked at me coldly, and said:

"'What have you to reproach me with, Frenchwoman?

You think that you will do right in avenging your husband's death, is not that so?'

"'Yes,' I replied.

"'Very well, then; in killing him I did what you are about to do in burning me. I avenged my husband, for your husband killed him.'

"'Well,' I replied, 'as you approve of this vengeance, prepare to endure it.'

"'I do not fear it.'

"And in fact she did not seem to have lost courage. Her face was calm, and she looked at me without trembling, while I brought wood and dried leaves, and feverishly threw on them the powder from some cartridges, which was to make her funeral pile the more cruel.

"I hesitated in my thoughts of persecution for a moment. But the Captain was there, pale and covered with blood, and he seemed to be looking at me with his large, glassy eyes, and I applied myself to my work again after kissing his pale lips. Suddenly, however, on raising my head, I saw that she was weeping, and I felt rather surprised.

"'So you are frightened?' I said to her.

"'No, but when I saw you kiss your husband, I thought of mine, and of all whom I love.'

"She continued to sob, but stopping suddenly, she said to me in broken words and in a low voice:

"'Have you any children?'

"A shiver ran over me, for I guessed that this poor woman had some. She asked me to look in a pocketbook which was in her bosom, and in it I saw two photographs of quite young children, a boy and a girl, with those kind, gentle, chubby faces that German children have. In it there were also two locks of light hair and a letter in a large, childish hand, and beginning with German words which meant: 'My dear little mother.'

"I could not restrain my tears, my dear friend, and so I untied her, and without venturing to look at the face of my poor dead husband, who was not to be avenged, I went with her as far as the inn. She is free; I have just

left her, and she kissed me with tears. I am going upstairs to my husband; come as soon as possible, my dear friend, to look for our two bodies."

I set off with all speed, and when I arrived there was a Prussian patrol at the cottage; and when I asked what it all meant I was told that there was a Captain of *francs-tireurs* and his wife inside, both dead. I gave their names; they saw that I knew them, and I begged to be allowed to arrange their funeral.

"Somebody has already undertaken it," was the reply. "Go in if you wish to, as you know them. You can settle about their funeral with their friend."

I went in. The Captain and his wife were lying side by side on a bed, and were covered by a sheet. I raised it, and saw that the woman had inflicted a wound in her throat similar to that from which her husband had died.

At the side of the bed there sat, watching and weeping, the woman who had been mentioned to me as their best friend. It was the lancer's wife.

PRISONERS OF WAR

NOT a sound was to be heard in the forest save the indistinct, fluttering sound of the snow falling on the trees. It had been snowing since noon; a fine snow, which covered the branches as with frozen moss and spread a silvery mantle over the dead leaves in the ditches, covered the roads with a white, yielding carpet, and made still more intense the boundless silence of this ocean of trees.

Before the door of a forester's dwelling a young woman, her arms bare to the elbow, was chopping wood with a hatchet on a block of stone. She was tall, slender, strong—a true woman of the woods, daughter and wife of a forester.

A voice called from within the house:

"We are alone tonight, Berthine; you must come in. It is growing dark, and there may be Prussians or wolves about."

"I've just finished, mother," replied the young woman, splitting as she spoke an immense log of wood with strong, deft blows, which expanded her

chest every time she raised her arms to strike. "Here I am; there's no need to be afraid; it is still light."

She gathered up her sticks and logs, piled them in the chimney corner, went back to close the great oaken shutters, and finally came in, drawing behind her the heavy bolts of the door.

Her mother, a wrinkled old woman whom age had rendered timid, was spinning by the fireside.

"I am uneasy," she said, "when your father is not here. Two women are not much good."

"Oh," said the younger woman, "I'd cheerfully kill a wolf or a Prussian if necessary."

And she glanced at a heavy revolver hanging above the hearth.

Her husband had been called upon to serve in the army at the beginning of the Prussian invasion, and the two women had remained alone with the old father, a keeper named Nicolas Pichon, sometimes called Long-legs, who refused obstinately to leave his home and take refuge in the town.

This town was Rethel, an ancient stronghold built on a rock. Its inhabitants were patriotic, and had made up their minds to resist the invaders, to fortify their native place, and, if need be, to stand a siege as in the good old days. Twice already, under Henri IV and under Louis XIV, the people of Rethel had distinguished themselves by their heroic defense of their town. They would do as much now, they said, or be killed in their own houses.

They had, therefore, bought cannon and rifles, organized a militia, and formed themselves into battalions and companies, and now spent their time drilling all day long in the square. Everyone—bakers, grocers, butchers, lawyers, carpenters, booksellers, chemists—took his turn at military training, at regular hours of the day, under the leadership of Monsieur Lavigne, a former noncommissioned officer in the dragoons, now a draper, having married the daughter and inherited the business of Monsieur Ravaudan, Senior.

He had taken the rank of commanding officer in Rethel, and, seeing that all the young men had gone off to the war, he had enlisted all the others who were in favor of resisting an attack. Fat men now invariably walked the streets at a rapid pace, to reduce their weight and improve their breathing, and feeble men carried weights to strengthen their muscles.

And they awaited the Prussians. But the Prussians did not appear. They were not far off, however, for twice already their scouts had penetrated as far as the forest dwelling of Nicolas Pichon, called Long-legs.

The old keeper, who could run like a fox, had come and warned the town. The guns had been got ready, but the enemy had not shown themselves.

Long-legs's dwelling served as an outpost in the Aveline forest. Twice a week the old man went to

the town for provisions and brought the citizens news of the outlying district.

On this particular day he had gone to announce the fact that a small detachment of German infantry had stopped at his house the day before, about two o'clock in the afternoon, and had left again almost immediately. The noncommissioned officer in charge spoke French.

When the old man set out like this he took with him his dogs—two powerful animals with the jaws of lions—as a safeguard against the wolves, which were beginning to be fierce, and he left directions with the two women to barricade themselves securely within their dwelling as soon as night fell.

The younger feared nothing, but her mother was always apprehensive, and repeated continually:

"We'll come to grief one of these days. You see if we don't!"

This evening she was more nervous than ever.

"Do you know what time your father will be back?" she asked.

"Oh, not before eleven. When he dines with the commandant he's always late."

And Berthine was hanging her pot over the fire to warm the soup when she suddenly stood still, listening attentively to a sound that had reached her through the chimney.

"There are people walking in the wood," she said; "seven or eight men at least, and they are coming this way."

The terrified old woman stopped her spinning-wheel, and gasped:

"Oh, my God! And your father not here!"

She had scarcely finished speaking when a succession of violent blows shook the door.

As the woman made no reply, a loud, guttural voice shouted:

"Open the door!"

After a brief silence the same voice repeated:

"Open the door or I'll break it down!"

Berthine took the heavy revolver from its hook, slipped it into the pocket of her skirt, and, putting her ear to the door, asked:

"Who are you?"

"The detachment that came here yesterday," replied the voice.

"What do you want?" demanded the young woman.

"My men and I have lost our way in the forest since morning. Open the door or I'll break it down!"

The forester's daughter had no choice; she drew back the heavy bolts, threw open the ponderous shutter, and perceived in the wan light of the snow six men, Prussian soldiers, the same who had visited the house the day before.

"What are you doing here at this time of night?" she asked dauntlessly.

"I lost my bearings," replied the officer; "lost

them completely. Then I recognized this house. I've eaten nothing since morning, and neither have my men."

"But I'm quite alone with my mother this evening," said Berthine.

"Never mind," replied the soldier, who seemed a decent sort of fellow. "We won't do you any harm, but you must give us something to eat. We are nearly dead with hunger and fatigue."

Then the girl moved aside.

"Come in," she said.

They entered, covered with snow, their helmets sprinkled with a creamy-looking froth, which gave them the appearance of meringues. They seemed completely exhausted.

The young woman pointed to the wooden benches on either side of the large table.

"Sit down," she said, "and I'll make you some soup. You certainly look tired, and no mistake."

Then she bolted the door again.

She put more water in the pot, added butter and potatoes; then, taking down a piece of bacon from a hook in the chimney corner, cut it in two and slipped half of it into the pot.

The six men watched her movements with hungry eyes. They had placed their rifles and helmets in a corner and waited for supper, as well behaved as children on a school bench.

The old mother had resumed her spinning, casting from time to time a furtive and uneasy glance

at the soldiers. Nothing was to be heard save the humming of the wheel, the crackling of the fire, and the singing of the water in the pot.

But suddenly a strange noise—a sound like the harsh breathing of some wild animal sniffing under the door—startled the occupants of the room.

The German officer sprang toward the rifles. Berthine stopped him with a gesture, and said, smilingly:

"It's only the wolves. They are like you—prowling through the forest."

The incredulous man wanted to see with his own eyes, and as soon as the door was opened he perceived two large grayish animals disappearing with long, swinging trot into the darkness.

He returned to his seat, muttering:

"I wouldn't have believed it!"

And he waited quietly till supper was ready.

The men devoured their meal voraciously, with mouths stretched to their ears that they might swallow the more. Their round eyes opened at the same time as their jaws, and as the soup coursed down their throats it made a noise like the gurgling of water in a rainpipe.

The two women watched in silence the movements of the big blond beards. The potatoes seemed to be engulfed in these moving fleeces.

But, as they were thirsty, the forester's daughter went down to the cellar to draw them some

cider. She was gone some time. The cellar was small, with an arched ceiling, and had served, so people said, as both prison and hiding-place during the Revolution. It was approached by means of a narrow, winding staircase, closed by a trap-door at the farther end of the kitchen.

When Berthine returned she was smiling mysteriously to herself. She gave the Germans her jug of cider.

Then she and her mother ate apart, at the other end of the kitchen.

The soldiers had finished eating, and were all six falling asleep as they sat round the table. Every now and then a forehead fell with a thud on the board, and the man, awakened suddenly, sat upright again.

Berthine said to the officer:

"Go and lie down, all of you, round the fire. There is plenty of room for six. I'm going up to my room with my mother."

And the two women went upstairs. They could be heard locking the door and walking about overhead for a time; then they were silent.

The Prussians lay down on the floor, with their feet to the fire and their heads resting on their rolled-up cloaks. Soon all six snored loudly and uninterruptedly in six different keys.

They had been sleeping for some time when a shot rang out so loudly that it seemed directed against the very walls of the house. The soldiers

rose hastily. Two—then three—more shots were fired.

The door opened hastily, and Berthine appeared, barefooted and only half dressed, with her candle in her hand and a scared look on her face.

"There are the French," she stammered; "at least two hundred of them. If they find you here they'll burn the house down. For God's sake, hurry down into the cellar, and don't make a sound, whatever you do. If you make any noise we are lost."

"We'll go, we'll go," replied the terrified officer. "Which is the way?"

The young woman hurriedly raised the small, square trap-door, and the six men disappeared one after another down the narrow, winding staircase, feeling their way as they went.

But as soon as the spike of the last helmet was out of sight Berthine lowered the heavy oaken lid —thick as a wall, hard as steel, furnished with the hinges and bolts of a prison cell—shot the two heavy bolts, and began to laugh long and silently, possessed with a mad longing to dance above the heads of her prisoners.

They made no sound, inclosed in the cellar as in a strong box, obtaining air only from a small, iron-barred vent-hole.

Berthine lighted her fire again, hung the pot over it, and prepared more soup, saying to herself:

"Father will be tired to-night."

Then she sat and waited. The heavy pendulum

of the clock swung to and fro with a monotonous tick.

At times the young woman cast an impatient glance at the dial—a glance which seemed to say:

"I wish he would be quick!"

But soon there was a sound of voices beneath her feet. Low, confused words reached her through the masonry which roofed the cellar. The Prussians were beginning to suspect the trick she had played them, and presently the officer came up the narrow staircase, and knocked at the trapdoor.

"Open the door!" he cried.

"What do you want?" she said, rising from her seat and approaching the cellarway.

"Open the door!"

"I will not!"

"Open it or I'll break it down!" shouted the man angrily.

She laughed.

"Hammer away, my good man! Hammer away!"

He struck with the butt-end of his gun at the closed oaken door. But it would have resisted a battering-ram.

The forester's daughter heard him go down the stairs again. Then the soldiers came one after another and tried their strength against the trapdoor. But, finding their efforts useless, they all returned to the cellar and began to talk among themselves.

The young woman heard them for a short time,

then she rose, opened the door of the house, looked out into the night, and listened.

A sound of distant barking reached her ear. She whistled just as a huntsman would, and almost immediately two great dogs emerged from the darkness, and bound to her side. She held them tight, and shouted at the top of her voice:

"Hello, father!"

A far-off voice replied:

"Hello, Berthine!"

She waited a few seconds, then repeated:

"Hello, father!"

The voice, nearer now, replied:

"Hello, Berthine!"

"Don't go in front of the vent-hole!" shouted his daughter. "There are Prussians in the cellar!"

Suddenly the man's tall figure could be seen to the left, standing between two tree trunks.

"Prussians in the cellar?" he asked anxiously. "What are they doing?"

The young woman laughed.

"They are the same that were here yesterday. They lost their way, and I've given them free lodgings in the cellar."

She told the story of how she had alarmed them by firing the revolver, and had shut them up in the cellar.

The man, still serious, asked:

"But what am I to do with them at this time of night?"

"Go and fetch Monsieur Lavigne with his men," she replied. "He'll take them prisoners. He'll be delighted."

Her father smiled.

"So he will—delighted."

"Here's some soup for you," said his daughter. "Eat it quick, and then be off."

The old keeper sat down at the table, and began to eat his soup, having first filled two plates and put them on the floor for the dogs.

The Prussians, hearing voices, were silent.

"Long-legs set off a quarter of an hour later, and Berthine, with her head between her hands, waited.

The prisoners began to make themselves heard again. They shouted, called, and beat furiously with the butts of their muskets against the rigid trap-door of the cellar.

Then they fired shots through the vent-hole, hoping, no doubt, to be heard by any German detachment which chanced to be passing that way.

The forester's daughter did not stir, but the noise irritated and unnerved her. Blind anger rose in her heart against the prisoners; she would have been only too glad to kill them all, and so silence them.

Then, as her impatience grew, she watched the clock, counting the minutes as they passed.

Her father had been gone an hour and a half. He must have reached the town by now. She con-

jured up a vision of him telling the story to Monsieur Lavigne, who grew pale with emotion, and rang for his servant to bring him his arms and uniform. She fancied she could hear the drum as it sounded the call to arms. Frightened faces appeared at the windows. The citizen-soldiers emerged from their houses half dressed, out of breath, buckling on their belts, and hurrying to the commandant's house.

Then the troop of soldiers, with Long-legs at its head, set forth through the night and the snow toward the forest.

She looked at the clock. "They may be here in an hour."

A nervous impatience possessed her. The minutes seemed endless. Would the time never come?

At last the clock marked the moment she had fixed on for their arrival.

And she opened the door to listen for their approach. She perceived a shadowy form creeping toward the house. She was afraid, and cried out. But it was her father.

"They have sent me," he said, "to see whether there is any change in the state of affairs."

"No—none."

Then he gave a shrill whistle. Soon a dark mass loomed up under the trees: the advance guard, composed of ten men.

"Don't go in front of the vent-hole!" repeated Long-legs at intervals.

And the first arrivals pointed out the much-dreaded vent-hole to those who came after.

At last the main body of the troop arrived, in all two hundred men, each carrying two hundred cartridges.

Monsieur Lavigne, in a state intense excitement, posted them in such a fashion as to surround the whole house, save for a large space left vacant in front of the little hole on a level with the ground, through which the cellar derived its supply of air.

Monsieur Lavigne struck the trap-door a blow with his foot, and called:

"I wish to speak to the Prussian officer!"

The German did not reply.

"The Prussian officer!" again shouted the commandant.

Still no response. For the space of twenty minutes Monsieur Lavigne called on this silent officer to surrender, promising him that all lives should be spared, and that he and his men should be accorded military honors. But he could extort no sign, either of consent or of defiance. The situation became puzzling.

The citizen-soldiers kicked their heels in the snow, slapping their arms across their chest, as cab-drivers do, to warm themselves, and gazing at the vent-hole with a growing and childish desire to pass in front of it.

At last one of them took the risk—a man named Potdevin, who was fleet of limb. He ran like a deer

across the zone of danger. The experiment succeeded. The prisoners gave no sign of life.

A voice cried:

"No one is there! "

Another soldier crossed the open space before the dangerous vent-hole. Then this hazardous sport developed into a game. Every minute a man ran swiftly from one side to the other, like a boy playing baseball, kicking up the snow behind him as he ran. They had lighted big fires of dead wood at which to warm themselves, and the figures of the runners were illumined by the flames as they passed rapidly from the camp on the right to that on the left.

Some one shouted: "It's your turn now, Maloison."

Maloison was a fat baker, whose corpulent person served to point many a joke among his comrades.

He hesitated. They jeered at him. Then, nerving himself to the effort, he set off at a little, waddling gait, which shook his fat paunch and made the whole detachment laugh till they cried.

"Bravo, bravo, Maloison!" they shouted for his encouragement.

He had accomplished about two thirds of his journey when a long, crimson flame shot forth from the vent-hole. A loud report followed, and the fat baker fell face forward to the ground, uttering a frightful scream.

No one went to his assistance. Then he was seen to drag himself, groaning, on all fours through the snow until he was beyond danger, when he fainted.

He was shot in the upper part of the thigh.

After the first surprise and fright were over they laughed at him again.

But Monsieur Lavigne appeared on the threshold of the forester's dwelling. He had formed his plan of attack. He called in a loud voice:

"I want Planchut, the plumber, and his workmen."

Three men approached.

"Take the eaves-troughs from the roof."

In a quarter of an hour they brought the commandant thirty yards of pipes.

Next, with infinite precaution, he had a small round hole drilled in the trap-door; then, making a conduit with the troughs from the pump to this opening, he said, with an air of extreme satisfaction:

"Now we'll give these German gentlemen something to drink."

A shout of frenzied admiration, mingled with uproarious laughter, burst from his followers. And the commandant organized relays of men, who were to relieve one another every five minutes. Then he commanded:

"Pump!"

And, the pump-handle having been set in motion,

a stream of water trickled throughout the length of the piping, and flowed from step to step down the cellar stairs with a gentle, gurgling sound.

They waited.

An hour passed, then two, then three.

The commandant, in a state of feverish agitation, walked up and down the kitchen, putting his ear to the ground every now and then to discover, if possible, what the enemy were doing and whether they would capitulate.

The enemy were astir now. They could be heard moving the casks about, talking, splashing through the water.

Then, after eight o'clock in the morning, a voice said from the vent-hole:

"I want to speak to the French officer."

Lavigne replied from the window, taking care not to put his head out too far:

"Do you surrender?"

"I surrender."

"Then put your rifles outside."

A rifle immediately protruded from the hole, and fell into the snow, then another and another, until all were disposed of. And the voice which had spoken before said:

"I have no more. Be quick! I am drowning."

"Stop pumping!" ordered the commandant.

The pump-handle hung motionless.

Then, having filled the kitchen with armed and waiting soldiers, he slowly raised the oaken door.

Four heads appeared, soaking wet, four blond heads with long, fair hair, and one after another the six Germans emerged—scared, shivering, and dripping from head to foot.

They were seized and bound. Then, as the French feared a surprise, they set off at once in two convoys, one in charge of the prisoners, and the other conducting Maloison on a mattress borne on poles.

They made a triumphal entry into Rethel.

Monsieur Lavigne was decorated as a reward for having captured a Prussian advance guard, and the fat baker received the military metal for wounds received at the hands of the enemy.

WOMAN'S LOVE

THE dinner that opened the hunt was at an end. The Marquis de Bertrans sat with his guests around a brightly lighted table, covered with fruits and flowers. The conversation drifted to the subject of love. Immediately an animated discussion arose, the same eternal discussion as to whether it is possible to love more than once. Examples were given of persons who had loved only once; these were offset by stories of those who had loved violently many times. The men agreed that passion, like illness, may attack the same person several times, unless it strikes to kill. This conclusion seemed quite incontestable. But the women, who based their opinion on poetry rather than on practical observation, maintained that love, the great passion, comes only once to mortals. Love resembles powder, they said. A heart once touched with it becomes forever so ravaged, so consumed, that no other strong sentiment can find rest in it, not even a dream.

The Marquis, who had indulged in many love affairs, disputed this belief.

"I tell you it is possible to love several times with all one's heart and soul. You quote examples of persons who have killed themselves to prove the impossibility of feeling a second passion. I wager that if they had not foolishly committed suicide and so destroyed the possibility of a second experience they would have found a new love, and still another and another till death. It is with love as with drink. He that has once indulged is a slave forever. It is a matter of temperament."

They chose the old Doctor as arbitrator. He agreed with the Marquis, that it is a matter of temperament.

"As for me," he said, "I once knew of a love that lasted fifty-five years without one day's cessation, which ended only with death." The Marquis' wife clasped her hands.

"How beautiful! Ah, what a dream to be loved like that! What bliss to live for fifty-five years enveloped in an unwavering, penetrating affection! How this happy being must have blessed her life, to be so adored!"

The Doctor smiled.

"You are mistaken, Madame, on that point—the loved one was a man. You even know him; it is Monsieur Chonquet, the chemist. As to the woman, you knew her also—the old chair-mender, who came every year to the Château." The enthusiasm of the women faded. Some expressed their contempt with "Pooh!" for the love of common per-

sons did not interest them. The Doctor continued: "Three months ago I was called to the deathbed of the old chair-mender. The priest had preceded me. She wished to make us the executors of her will. In order that we might understand her conduct, she told us the story of her life. It was most singular and touching. Her father and mother were chair-menders. She never had lived long in any one place. As a little child she wandered about with them, dirty, neglected, and hungry. They visited many towns, leaving their horse, wagon, and dog outside the limits, where the child played in the grass alone until her parents had mended all the broken chairs in the place. They seldom spoke, except to cry, 'Chairs! Chairs! Have your chairs mended!'

"When the little one strayed too far away, she was called back by the harsh, angry voice of her father. She never heard a word of affection. When she grew older, she fetched and carried the broken chairs. Then it was that she made friends with the little street urchins, but their parents always called them away and scolded them for speaking to the barefooted mender. Often the boys threw stones at her. Once a kind woman gave her a few sous. She saved them carefully.

"One day—she was then eleven years old—as she picked her way through a country town she met, behind the cemetery, the little Chonquet, weeping bitterly, because one of his playmates had stolen two

precious sous. The tears of the small villager, one of those much-envied mortals who, she imagined, never knew trouble, greatly disturbed her. She approached him and, bowing, asked the cause of his grief, and put into his hands all her savings. He took them without hesitation and dried his eyes. Wild with joy, she kissed him. He was busy counting his money, and did not object. Seeing that she was not repulsed, she began again to kiss him and even gave him a tremendous hug—then she ran away.

"What was passing in her poor little head? Was it because she had sacrificed all her fortune that she became madly fond of him, or was it because she had given him her first tender kiss? The mystery is alike for children and for those of riper years. For months she dreamed of that corner near the cemetery and of the little village boy. She stole small coins from her parents to give to him at their next meeting. When she returned to the spot near the cemetery, he was not there. Passing his father's shop, she caught sight of him behind the counter. He was sitting between a large red globe and a blue one. She only loved him the more, and wrought up to an ecstasy by the sight of him surrounded by the brilliant-colored globes, she nearly fainted with emotion. She cherished forever in her heart this beautiful sight. The following year she met him near the school, playing marbles. She threw herself on him, took him in

her arms, and kissed him so passionately that he cried aloud. To quiet him, she gave him all her money. Three francs! A veritable gold mine, at which he gazed with staring eyes.

"After this he allowed her to caress him as much as she wished. During the next four years she put into his hands all her savings, which he pocketed conscientiously in exchange for kisses. At one time it was thirty sous, at another two francs. Again, she only had twelve sous. She wept with grief and shame, explaining brokenly that it had been a bad year. The next time she brought five francs, in one whole piece, which made her laugh with delight. She no longer thought of anyone but the boy, and he watched for her with impatience; sometimes he would run to meet her. This made her heart throb with joy. Suddenly he disappeared. He had gone to boarding-school. She found this out by careful investigation. She soon ingratiated herself with his parents and used her diplomacy in order that they might call him home for the holidays. After a year of intrigue she met with success. She had not seen him for two years, and hardly recognized him, he was so changed—tall, beautiful, and dignified in his uniform, with its brass buttons. He pretended not to know her, and passed by without a glance. She wept for two days and after that she loved and suffered until the end.

"Every year he returned and she passed him,

not daring to lift her eyes. He never condescended to turn his head toward her. She loved him madly, hopelessly. She said to me:

"'He is the only man whom I have ever seen. I don't even know whether another exists.' Her parents died and she continued their work.

"One day, on entering the village, where her heart always remained, she saw Chonquet coming out of his pharmacy with a young lady leaning on his arm. She was his bride. That night the chair-mender threw herself into the river. A drunkard passing the spot pulled her out and took her to the pharmacy. Young Chonquet came down in his dressing-gown to revive her. Without seeming to know who she was, he undressed her and rubbed her; then he said, in a harsh voice:

"'You are crazy! People must not do stupid things like that.' His voice brought her to life again, and she was happy for a long time. He refused remuneration for his trouble, although she insisted on paying him.

"All her life passed in this way. She worked, thinking always of him. She began to buy medicines at his pharmacy; this gave her a chance to talk to him and to see him closely. In a way, she was still able to give him money.

"As I said before, she died this spring. When she had finished her pathetic story she entreated me to take her earnings to the man she loved. She had worked only that she might leave him something to

remind him of her after death. I gave the priest fifty francs for her funeral expenses. The next morning I took the rest of the money to Monsieur Chonquet as he was finishing his breakfast. His wife sat at the table, fat and red, important and self-satisfied. They welcomed me and offered me some coffee, which I accepted. Then I began my story in a trembling voice, sure that they would be softened, even to tears. As soon as Chonquet understood that he had been loved by 'that vagabond! that chair-mender! that stroller!' he swore with indignation, as if his reputation had been sullied, the respect of decent people lost, his personal honor, something precious and dearer to him than life, gone. His exasperated wife kept repeating: 'That thing! That creature!'

"Seeming unable to find words suitable to the enormity, he rose and began striding about. He muttered: 'Can you understand anything so horrible, Doctor? If I had only known it while she was alive, I should have had her thrown into prison. I assure you, she would not have escaped.'

"I was dumbfounded; I hardly knew what to think or say, but I had to finish my mission. 'She commissioned me,' I said, 'to give you her savings, which amount to three thousand five hundred francs. As what I have just told you seems to be very disagreeable, perhaps you would prefer to give this money to the poor.'

"The man and the woman looked at me speech-

less with amazement. I took the few thousand francs from my pocket. Wretched-looking money from every country. Coppers and gold pieces were mingled together.

" 'What is your decision?' I asked.

"Madame Chonquet spoke first. 'Well, since it was the dying woman's wish, it seems to me impossible to refuse it.'

"Her husband said, in a shamefaced manner: 'We could purchase something for our children with it.'

" 'As you wish,' I answered dryly.

"He replied: 'Well, give it to us anyhow, since she commissioned you to do so; we will find a way to use it for some good purpose.'

"I gave them the money, bowed and departed.

"The next day Chonquet came to me and said brusquely:

" 'That women left her wagon here—what have you done with it?'

" 'Nothing; take it if you wish.'

" 'It's just what I wanted,' he said, and walked off. I called him back and said:

" 'She left her old horse and two dogs also. Don't you need them?'

"He stared at me, surprised: 'Well, no! Really, what could I do with them?'

" 'Dispose of them as you like.'

"He laughed and held out his hand to me. I shook it. What could I do? The doctor and the

chemist must not be at enmity. I have kept the dogs. The priest took the old horse. The wagon is useful to Chonquet, and with the money he has bought railroad stock. That is the only deep, unfailing example of love that I have ever known in my whole existence."

The Doctor looked up. The Marquise, whose eyes were full of tears, sighed and said:

"There is no denying the fact, only women know how to love."

THE DEVIL'S VISIT

ON opposite sides of the bed the peasant and the doctor stood beside the dying old woman. She was calm and resigned and her mind was quite clear as she looked at them and listened to their conversation. She was about to die, and she did not rebel at it, for her time was come, as she was ninety-two years old.

The July sun streamed in through the window and the open door, and cast its hot flames on the uneven brown mud floor, which had been stamped upon by four generations of peasants. The smell of fields came in also, driven by the brisk wind and parched by the noontide heat. The grasshoppers chirped themselves hoarse, and filled the country with their shrill noise, which was like that of the wooden toys sold to children at fair time.

The doctor said: "Honoré, you cannot leave your mother in this state; she may die at any moment." The peasant, in great distress, replied: "But I must get in my wheat, for it has been lying on the ground a long time, and the weather is just right for it; what do you say about it, mother?" And

the dying old woman, still tormented by her Norman avariciousness, assented with her eyes and forehead, and thus urged her son to get in his wheat, and to leave her to die alone.

But the doctor was angry, and, stamping his foot, he said: "You are no better than a brute, do you hear, and I will not allow you to do it, you understand? And if you must get in your wheat today, go and bring Rapet's wife and make her look after your mother; I will have it, do you understand me? If you do not obey me, I will let you die like a dog when you are ill in your turn; do you hear?"

The peasant, a tall, thin fellow with slow movements, who was tormented by indecision, by his fear of the doctor and his fierce love of saving, hesitated, calculated, and stammered: "How much does La Rapet charge for attending sick people?" "How should I know?" the doctor cried. "That depends upon how long she is needed. Settle it with her! But I want her to be here within an hour, do you hear?"

So the man decided. "I will go for her," he replied; "don't be angry, doctor." And the latter departed, calling out as he went: "Be careful, be very careful, you know, for I do not joke when I am angry!" As soon as they were alone the peasant turned to his mother and said in a resigned voice: "I will go and fetch La Rapet, as the doctor will have it. Don't worry till I get back."

And he, too, departed.

La Rapet, who was an old laundress, watched the dead and the dying of the neighborhood, and as soon as she had sewn her customers into that linen garment from which they would emerge no more, she took up her irons to smooth out the linen of the living. Wrinkled like a last year's apple, spiteful, envious, avaricious with a phenomenal avarice, bent double, as if she had been broken in half across the loins by the constant motion of passing the iron over the linen, one might have said that she had a kind of abnormal and cynical love of a death-struggle. She never spoke of anything but the persons she had seen die, of the various kinds of deaths at which she had been present, and she related with the greatest minuteness details that were always similar, just as a sportsman recounts his luck.

When Honoré Bontemps entered her cottage, he found her preparing the starch for the collars of the women villagers, and he said: "Good evening; I hope you are pretty well, Mother Rapet?"

She turned her head round to look at him, and said: "As usual, as usual, and you?" "Oh! as for me, I am as well as I could wish, but my mother is not well." "Your mother?" "Yes, my mother!" "What's the matter with her?" "She is going to die, that's what's the matter with her!"

The old woman took her hands out of the water and asked with sudden sympathy: "Is she as bad

as all that?" "The doctor says she will not last till morning." "Then she certainly is very bad!" Honoré hesitated, for he wished to make a few preparatory remarks before coming to his proposition; but as he could hit upon nothing, he made up his mind suddenly.

"How much will you ask to stay with her till the end? You know that I am not rich, and I cannot even afford to keep a maid servant. It is just that which has brought my poor mother to this state—too much worry and fatigue! She did the work of ten, in spite of her ninety-two years. You don't find any made of that stuff nowadays!"

La Rapet answered gravely: "There are two prices: Forty sous by day and three francs by night for the rich, and twenty sous by day and forty by night for the others. You shall pay me the twenty and forty." But the peasant reflected, for he knew his mother well. He knew how tenacious of life, how vigorous and unyielding she was, and she might last another week, in spite of the doctor's opinion; and so he said resolutely: "No, I would rather you would fix a price for the whole time until the end. I will take my chance, one way or the other. The doctor says she will die very soon. If that happens, so much the better for you, and so much the worse for her; but if she holds out till tomorrow or longer, so much the better for her and so much the worse for you!"

The nurse looked at the man in astonishment,

for she had never treated a death as a speculation, and she hesitated, tempted by the idea of the possible gain, but she suspected that he wanted to play her a trick. "I can say nothing until I have seen your mother," she replied.

"Then come with me and see her."

She washed her hands, and went with him immediately.

They did not speak on the road; she walked with short, hasty steps, while he strode on with his long legs, as if he were crossing a brook at every step.

The cows lying down in the fields, overcome by the heat, raised their heads heavily and lowed feebly at the two passers-by, as if to ask them for some green grass.

When they got near the house, Honoré Bontemps murmured: "Suppose it is all over?" And the unconscious wish which he had that it might be so showed itself in the sound of his voice.

But the old woman was not dead. She was lying on her back, on her miserable bed, her hands covered with a purple cotton counterpane—horribly thin, knotted hands, like the claws of strange animals, or like crabs, half closed by rheumatism, fatigue, and the work of nearly a century which she had accomplished.

La Rapet went up to the bed and looked at the dying woman, felt her pulse, tapped her on the chest, listened to her breathing, and asked her questions, so as to hear her speak; and then, having

looked at her for some time, she went out of the room, followed by Honoré. Her decided opinion was that the old woman would not live through the night. "Well?" said the son. And the sick-nurse replied: "She may last two days, perhaps three. You will have to give me six francs, everything included."

"Six francs! six francs!" he shouted. "Are you out of your mind? I tell you that she cannot last more than five or six hours!" They disputed angrily for some time, but as the nurse said she must go home, for time was going by, and as his wheat would not come to the farmyard of its own accord, he finally agreed to her terms.

"Very well, then, that is settled; six francs, including everything, until the corpse is taken out."

"That is settled, six francs."

And he went away, with long strides, to his wheat which was lying on the ground under the hot sun, while the nurse went into the house again.

She had brought some work with her, for she worked without ceasing by the side of the dead and dying, sometimes for herself, sometimes for the family which employed her as seamstress and paid her rather more in that capacity. Suddenly she asked: "Have you received the last sacraments, Mother Bontemps?"

The old peasant woman shook her head, and La Rapet, who was very devout, got up quickly: "Good heavens, is it possible? I will go and fetch the

curé;" and she rushed off to the parsonage so quickly that the urchins in the street thought some accident had happened, when they saw her running.

The priest came immediately in his surplice, preceded by a choir-boy who rang a bell to announce the passage of the Host through the parched and quiet country. Some men who were working at a distance took off their large hats and remained motionless until the white vestment had disappeared behind some farm buildings; the women who were making up the sheaves stood up to make the sign of the cross; the frightened black hens ran away along the ditch until they reached a well-known hole, through which they suddenly disappeared, while a colt which was tied in a meadow took fright at the sight of the surplice and began to gallop around and around, kicking out every now and then. The acolyte, in his red cassock, walked quickly, and the priest, with his head inclined toward one shoulder and his square biretta on his head, followed him, muttering some prayers; while last of all came La Rapet, bent almost double as if she wished to prostrate herself, walking with folded hands as they do in church.

Honoré saw them pass in the distance, and he asked: "Where is our priest going?" His man, who was more intelligent, replied: "He is taking the sacrament to your mother, of course!"

The peasant was not surprised, and said: "That may be," and went on with his work.

Mother Bontemps confessed, received absolution and communion, and the priest took his departure, leaving the two women alone in the suffocating room, while La Rapet began to look at the dying woman, and to ask herself whether she could last much longer.

The day was on the wane, and gusts of cooler air began to blow, causing a picture of Epinal, which was fastened to the wall by two pins, to flap up and down; the scanty window curtains, which had formerly been white, but were now yellow and covered with fly-specks, looked as if they were going to fly off, as if they were struggling to get away, like the old woman's soul.

Lying motionless, with her eyes open, she seemed to await with indifference that death which was so near and which yet delayed its coming. Her short breath whistled in her constricted throat. It would stop altogether soon, and there would be one woman less in the world; no one would regret her.

At nightfall Honoré returned, and when he went up to the bed and saw that his mother was still alive, he asked: "How is she?" just as he had done formerly when she had been ailing, and then he sent La Rapet away, saying to her: "To-morrow morning at five o'clock, without fail." And she replied: "To-morrow, at five o'clock."

She came at daybreak, and found Honoré eating his soup, which he had made himself before going to work, and the nurse asked: "Well, is your mother

dead?" "She is rather better, on the contrary," he replied, with a sly look out of the corner of his eyes. And he went out.

La Rapet, seized with anxiety, went up to the dying woman, who remained in the same state, lethargic and impassive, with her eyes open and her hands clutching the counterpane. The nurse perceived that this might go on thus for two days, four days, eight days, and her avaricious mind was seized with fear, while she was furious at the sly fellow who had tricked her, and at the woman who would not die.

Nevertheless, she began to work, and waited, looking intently at the wrinkled face of Mother Bontemps. When Honoré returned to breakfast he seemed quite satisfied and even in a bantering humor. He was decidedly getting in his wheat under very favorable circumstances.

La Rapet was becoming exasperated; every minute now seemed to her so much time and money stolen from her. She felt a mad inclination to take this old woman, this headstrong old fool, this obstinate old wretch, and to stop that short, rapid breath, which was robbing her of her time and money, by squeezing her throat a little. But then she reflected on the danger of doing so, and other thoughts came into her head; so she went up to the bed and said: "Have you ever seen the Devil?" Mother Bontemps murmured: "No."

Then the nurse began to talk and to tell her tales

which were likely to terrify the weak mind of the dying woman. Some minutes before one dies the Devil appears, she said, to all who are in the death throes. He has a broom in his hand, a saucepan on his head, and he utters loud cries. When anybody sees him, all is over, and that person has only a few moments longer to live. She then enumerated all those to whom the Devil had appeared that year: Josephine Loisel, Eulalie Ratier, Sophie Padaknau, Séraphine Grospied.

Mother Bontemps, who had at last become disturbed in mind, moved about, wrung her hands, and tried to turn her head to look toward the end of the room. Suddenly La Rapet disappeared at the foot of the bed. She took a sheet out of the cupboard and wrapped herself up in it; she put the iron saucepan on her head, so that its three short bent feet rose up like horns, and she took a broom in her right hand and a tin pail in her left, which she threw up suddenly, so that it might fall to the ground noisily.

When it fell, it certainly made a terrible crash. Then, climbing upon a chair, the nurse lifted the curtain that hung at the foot of the bed, and showed herself, gesticulating and uttering shrill cries inside the iron saucepan which covered her face.

Terrified, with an insane expression on her face, the dying woman made a superhuman effort to rise and escape; she even got her shoulders and chest out of bed; then she fell back with a deep sigh.

All was over, and La Rapet calmly put everything back into its place; the broom into the corner by the cupboard, the sheet inside it, the saucepan on the hearth, the pail on the floor, and the chair against the wall. Then, with professional movements, she closed the dead woman's large eyes, put a plate on the bed and poured some holy water into it, placing in it the twig of boxwood that had been nailed to the chest of drawers, and kneeling down, she fervently repeated the prayers for the dead, which she knew by heart, as a matter of business.

And when Honoré returned in the evening he found her praying, and he calculated immediately that she had made twenty sous out of him, for she had spent only three days and one night there, which made five francs altogether, instead of the six which he owed her.

WAS IT A DREAM?

YES, I loved her wildly! Why do we love? Why do we love? How strange it is to see only one being in the world, to have only one thought in the mind, one desire in the heart, and one name on the lips; a name that comes up continually, rising from the depths of the soul like water from a spring, and which one repeats over and over again, and murmurs incessantly everywhere, like a prayer.

"I shall not tell you our story. Love is always the same. I met her and loved her; that is all. For a whole year I lived in her tenderness, her caresses, in her arms, hung on her words and looks, loved her gowns, was so completely wrapped up, bound, imprisoned in everything that pertained to her that I no longer knew whether it was day or night, whether I were dead or alive, on this old earth of ours or elsewhere.

"Then she died. How? I do not know; I no longer know. But one evening she came home with her clothes wet, for it was raining heavily. The next day she coughed, and she coughed for about a

week, and took to her bed. What happened I do not remember now; but doctors came, wrote prescriptions, and went away. Medicines were brought, and a nurse made her take them. Her hands were feverish, her forehead burned, and her eyes were bright and sad. When I spoke to her she answered, but I do not remember what we said. I have forgotten everything, everything, everything! She died, and I remember well her little faint sigh—her last. The nurse said: 'Ah!' and I understood, I understood!

"I knew nothing more, nothing. I saw a priest, who said: 'Your mistress?' and it seemed to me as if he were insulting her. As she was dead, nobody had the right to know our relationship, and I turned him out. Another came who was very kind and tender, and I wept when he spoke to me about her.

"They consulted me about the funeral, but I do not remember anything they said, though I distinctly recall the coffin and the strokes of the hammer as they nailed her in it. Oh, my God, my God!

"She was buried! Buried! She! In that hole! Some persons came—women friends. I made my escape, and ran away; I ran, and then I walked, through the streets, and finally went home. The next day I set out on a journey.

"Yesterday I returned to Paris, and when I saw my room again—our room, our bed, our furniture, everything that remains of the life of a human being after death—I was seized by such a violent re-

currence of grief that I came very near opening the window and throwing myself into the street. As I could no longer stay among these things, between these walls which had enclosed and sheltered her, and which retained a thousand atoms of her, of her skin and her breath, in their imperceptible crevices, I took up my hat to make my escape, and just as I reached the door I passed the large mirror in the hall, which she had put there so that she could look at herself every day from head to foot as she went out, to see whether her toilet was in order, and was correct and pretty, from her little shoes to her hat.

"I stopped short in front of that looking-glass in which she had so often been reflected—so often—that it too must have retained her reflection. I was standing there, trembling, with my eyes fixed on the glass—on that flat, deep, empty glass—which had contained her entirely, and had possessed her as much as I had, as my passionate looks had. I felt as if I loved that glass. I touched it; it was cold. Oh, the recollection! Sorrowful mirror, burning mirror, live mirror, horrible mirror, which makes us suffer such torments! Happy is the man whose heart is like a mirror where images glide and pass away; that forgets all it has contained, reflected, all that have basked in its love and affection! But I—how I suffer!

"I went out and, without knowing it, without wishing it, walked to the cemetery. I found her

simple grave, with its white marble cross, bearing these few words:

"*'She loved, was beloved, and died.'*

"She lay there, beneath the ground, decomposed! How horrible! I sobbed, with my forehead resting on the ground. I remained there a long, long time. Then I saw that it was growing dark, and a strange, mad wish, the desire of a despairing lover, seized me. I wished to pass the night, the last night, in weeping on her grave. But I should be seen and driven out. How was I to manage? I was cunning, so I rose and began to roam about that city of the dead. I walked and walked. How small this city is, in comparison with the other —the city in which we live! And yet, how much more numerous are the dead than the living! We require high houses, wide streets, and much room for the four generations who see daylight at the same time, drink water from the spring, wine from the vines, and eat the bread from the fields.

"And for all the generations of the dead, for all that ladder of humanity that has descended to us, there is hardly anything—only a field! The earth takes them back, oblivion effaces them. Farewell!

"At the end of this cemetery I suddenly perceived the old abandoned portion where the dead have long since blended with the soil, where the crosses themselves decay, where the latest comers will be put to-morrow. It is full of untended roses,

of robust, dark cypress trees, a sad and beautiful garden, nourished on human flesh.

"I was alone, absolutely alone. I hid in a leafy tree, and concealed myself completely among the thick and somber branches, and waited, clinging to the trunk, as a shipwrecked man clings to a plank.

"When it was quite dark I left my refuge and began to walk softly, slowly, noiselessly through that ground full of the dead, and I wandered about a long time, but could not find her again. I went on with extended arms, striking against the tombs with my hands, my feet, my knees, my chest, even with my head, without being able to find her. I touched and felt about like a blind man groping his way. I felt the stones, the crosses, the iron railings, the metal wreaths, and the wreaths of faded flowers! I read the names with my fingers, by passing them over the letters. What a night! What a night! I could not find her again!

"There was no moon. What a night! I was afraid, horribly afraid in these narrow paths, between two rows of graves. Graves! graves! graves! nothing but graves! On my right, on my left, in front of me, around me, everywhere there were graves! I sat down on one of them, for I could not walk any longer, my knees were so weak. I could hear my heart throb! And I could hear something else as well. What? A confused, nameless noise. Was the noise in my head, in the impene-

trable night, or beneath the mysterious earth, the earth sown with human corpses? I looked about me, but I cannot say how long I remained there; I was paralyzed with terror, drunk with fright, ready to cry out, ready to die.

"Suddenly it seemed to me as if the slab of marble on which I was sitting was moving. Certainly, it was moving, as if it were being raised. With a bound I sprang upon the neighboring tomb, and I saw, yes, I distinctly saw the stone I had just left standing upright, and the dead person appeared, a naked skeleton, pushing the stone with its bent back. I saw it quite clearly, although the night was so dark. On the cross I could read:

" *'Here lies Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty-one. He loved his family, was kind and honorable, and died in the peace of God.'*

"The dead man also read what was inscribed on his tombstone; then he picked up a stone from the path, a little, pointed stone, and began to scrape the letters carefully. He slowly effaced them altogether, and with the hollows of his eyes he looked at the places where they had been engraved, and, with the tip of the bone that had been his forefinger he wrote in luminous letters, like those lines which one traces on walls with the tip of a lucifer match:

" *'Here reposes Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty-one. He hastened his father's death by*

his unkindness, as he wished to inherit his fortune; he tortured his wife, tormented his children, deceived his neighbors, robbed every one he could, and died wretchedly unhappy.'

"When he had finished writing, the dead man stood motionless, looking at his work, and on turning round I saw that all the graves were open, that all the dead bodies had emerged from them, and that all had effaced the lies inscribed on their gravestones by their relatives, and had substituted the truth instead. And I saw that all had been the tormentors of their neighbors—malicious, dishonest, hypocrites, liars, rascals, calumniators, envious; that they had stolen, deceived, performed every disgraceful, every abominable action, these good fathers, these faithful wives, these devoted sons, these chaste maidens, these honest tradesmen, these men and women who were called irreproachable. They were all writing at the same time, on the threshold of their eternal abode, the truth, the cruel, terrible, and holy truth of which everyone on earth is ignorant, or pretends to ignore.

"I thought that *she* also must have written something on her tombstone, and now, running without any fear among the half-open coffins, among the corpses and skeletons, I went toward her, sure that I should find her immediately. I recognized her at once, without seeing her face, which was covered by the winding-sheet, and on the marble cross,

where shortly before I had read: *'She loved, was beloved, and died,'* I now read: *'Having gone out one day, in order to deceive her lover, she caught cold in the rain and died.'*

"I heard that they found me at daybreak lying unconscious on her grave."

SIMON'S PAPA

THE hour of noon had just struck. The school door of the schoolhouse opened and the children darted out, jostling each other in their haste. But instead of dispersing promptly and going home to dinner as usual, they stopped a few paces away, broke up into groups, and began whispering.

The fact was that that morning Simon, the son of La Blanchotte, had attended school for the first time.

All the children had heard talk in their families of La Blanchotte; and, although in public she was welcome enough, the mothers among themselves treated her with a somewhat disdainful compassion, which the children had imitated without in the least knowing the reason why.

As for Simon himself, they did not know him, for he never went out, and did not play with them in the village streets or along the banks of the river. And they did not care for him; so it was with a certain delight, mingled with considerable astonish-

ment, that they met and repeated to one another what had been said by a lad of fourteen or fifteen, who appeared to know all about it, so wisely did he wink. "You know . . . Simon . . . well, he has no papa."

La Blanchotte's son suddenly appeared in the doorway of the schoolhouse.

He was seven or eight years old, rather pale, very neat, with a timid and almost awkward manner.

He was about to go to his mother's house when the groups of his schoolmates, whispering and watching him with the mischievous and heartless eyes of children bent upon playing a mean trick, gradually closed in around him and ended by surrounding him altogether. There he stood among them, surprised and embarrassed, not understanding what they intended to do with him. But the lad who had brought the news, puffed up with the success he had met with already, demanded:

"What is your name, you boy?"

"Simon," he answered.

"Simon what?" asked the other.

The child, altogether bewildered, repeated: "Simon."

The lad shouted at him: "One is named Simon something . . . that is not a name . . .Simon, indeed!"

The boy, on the brink of tears, replied for the third time:

"My name is Simon."

The other boys began to laugh. The triumphant tormentor cried: "You can see plainly that he has no papa."

A deep silence followed. The children were dumbfounded by this extraordinary, impossible, monstrous thing—a boy who had not a father; they looked upon him as a phenomenon, an unnatural being, and they felt that hitherto inexplicable contempt of their mothers for La Blanchotte growing within them. As for Simon, he had leaned against a tree to avoid falling, and he remained as if prostrated by an irreparable disaster. He sought to explain, but could think of nothing to say to refute this terrible charge that he had no father. At last he shouted at them quite recklessly: "Yes, I have one."

"Where is he?" the boy demanded.

Simon was silent; he did not know. The children roared, tremendously excited; and those country boys, little more than animals, experienced that cruel craving with prompts the fowls of a farmyard to destroy one among themselves as soon as it is wounded. Simon suddenly espied a little neighbor, the son of a widow, whom he had seen, as he himself was to be seen, always alone with his mother.

"And neither have you," he said. "Neither have you a papa."

"Yes," replied the other, "I have one."

"Where is he?" Simon asked.

"He is dead," declared the lad with superb dignity. "He is in the cemetery, is my papa."

A murmur of approval rose among the little wretches, as if this fact of possessing a papa dead in a cemetery had caused their comrade to grow big enough to crush the other one who had no papa at all. And these boys, whose fathers were for the most part bad men, drunkards, thieves, and who beat their wives, jostled one another to press closer and closer, as if they, the legitimate ones, would smother by their pressure one who was illegitimate.

The boy who chanced to be next Simon suddenly thrust his tongue out at him with a mocking air and shouted at him:

"No papa! No papa!"

Simon seized him by the hair with both hands and tried to disable his legs with kicks, while he bit his cheek ferociously. A tremendous struggle ensued between the two combatants, and Simon found himself beaten, torn, bruised and rolled on the ground in the midst of the ring of applauding schoolboys. As he arose, mechanically brushing with his hand his little blouse all covered with dust, some one shouted:

"Go and tell your papa."

Simon felt a great sinking at his heart. They were stronger than he was, they had beaten him, and he had no answer to give them, for he knew well that it was true that he had no father. Full of

pride, he attempted for some moments to struggle against the tears that were choking him. He had a feeling of suffocation, and then without any sound he began to weep, with heavy, shaking sobs. A ferocious joy broke out among his enemies, and, with one accord, like savages in their fearful festivals, they took one another by the hand and danced around him in a circle, repeating:

"No papa! no papa!"

Suddenly Simon ceased sobbing. He became furious. There were stones under his feet; he picked them up and with all his strength hurled them at his tormentors. Two or three were struck and rushed off yelling, and so formidable did he appear that the rest became panic-stricken. Cowards, as the mob always is in presence of an exasperated man, they broke up and fled. Left alone, the little fellow without a father set off running toward the fields, for a recollection had been awakened in him which determined his soul to a great resolve. He made up his mind to drown himself in the river.

He remembered, in fact, that a week before a poor beggar had thrown himself into the water because he had no more money. Simon had been there when they fished him out again; and the wretched man, who usually seemed to him so miserable and ugly, had then struck him as being enviably peaceful with his pale cheeks, his long drenched beard, and his open eyes full of calm. The bystanders had said:

"He is dead."

Some one added: "He is quite happy now."

And Simon wished to drown himself, too, because he had no father, like the wretched being who had no money.

He reached the water and watched it flowing. Some fish were sporting briskly in the clear stream and occasionally made a little bound and caught the flies flying on the surface. He stopped crying in order to watch them, for their maneuvers interested him greatly. But, at intervals, as in a tempest moments of calm alternate suddenly with tremendous gusts of wind, which snap off branches and then lose themselves in the horizon, this thought would return to him with intense pain:

"I want to drown myself because I have no papa."

The weather was very warm and fine. The pleasant sunshine warmed the grass, and the water shone like a mirror. Simon enjoyed some minutes of happiness, of that languor which follows weeping, and felt inclined to fall asleep there on the grass in the bright sunshine.

A little green frog leaped from under his feet. He tried to catch it. It escaped him. He followed it and lost it three times in succession. At last he caught it by one of its hind legs and began to laugh as he saw the efforts the creature made to escape. It gathered itself up on its hind legs and then with a violent spring suddenly stretched them out as stiff

as two bars; while it beat the air with its front legs as if they were hands, its round eyes staring in their circle of yellow. It reminded him of a toy made of straight slips of wood nailed zigzag one on the other, which by a similar movement regulated the movements of the little soldiers fastened thereon. Then he thought of his home, of his mother, and, overcome by sorrow he again began to weep. A shiver passed over him. He knelt down and said his prayers as before going to bed. But he was unable to finish them, for tumultuous, violent sobs shook his whole frame. He no longer thought, no longer saw anything around him, and was wholly absorbed in grief.

Suddenly a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a rough voice asked:

"What is it that causes you so much grief, my little man?"

Simon turned. A tall workman with a beard and black curly hair was staring at him good-naturedly. He answered with his eyes and throat full of tears:

"They beat me . . . because . . . I . . . have no . . . papa . . . no papa."

"What!" said the man, smiling, "why, everybody has one."

The child answered amid his spasms of weeping:

"But I . . . I . . . have none."

The workman became serious. He had recognized La Blanchotte's son, and, although himself

a new arrival in the neighborhood, he had a vague idea of her history.

"Well," said he, "console yourself, my boy, and come with me home to your mother. They will give you . . . a papa."

And so they started on the way, the big fellow holding the little fellow by the hand, and the man smiled, for he was rather curious to see this Blanchotte, who was, it was said, one of the prettiest girls of the countryside, and perhaps he was saying to himself, at the bottom of his heart, a lass who had erred once might very well err again.

They arrived in front of a neat little white house.

"There it is," exclaimed the child, and he cried, "Mamma!"

A woman appeared, and the workman instantly left off smiling, for he saw at once that no nonsense could be expected with the tall pale girl who stood austerely at her door as if to defend from one man the threshold of that house where she had already been betrayed by another. Intimidated, his cap in his hand, he stammered out:

"See, Madame, I have brought you back your little boy who had lost himself near the river."

But Simon flung his arms about his mother's neck and told her, as he again began to cry:

"No, mamma, I wished to drown myself, because the others had beaten me . . . had beaten me . . . because I have no papa."

A burning blush covered the young woman's

cheeks; and, hurt to the quick, she embraced her child passionately, while the tears ran down her face. The man, much moved, stood there, not knowing how to get away. But Simon suddenly ran to him and said:

"Will you be my papa?"

A deep silence ensued. La Blanchotte, dumb, and tortured with shame, leaned against the wall, both her hands pressed to her heart. The child, seeing that no answer was made added firmly:

"If you will not, I shall go back and drown myself."

The workman took the matter as a jest and answered, laughing:

"Oh, yes, certainly I will."

"What is your name," the child continued, "so that I may tell the others when they wish to know your name?"

"Philip," answered the man.

Simon was silent a moment so that he might get the name well into his head; then he stretched out his arms, quite consoled, as he said:

"Well, then, Philip, you are my papa."

The workman, lifting him from the ground, kissed him hastily on both cheeks, and then walked away quickly with great strides.

When the child returned to school next day he was received with a spiteful laugh, and at the end of school, when the lads were on the point of resuming their taunts, Simon threw these words at

their heads as he would have thrown a stone: "He is named Philip, my papa."

Cries of delight burst out from all sides.

"Philip who? . . . Philip what? Who is this Philip? Where did you find your Philip?"

Simon did not answer; and, immovable in his faith, he defied them with his eye, ready to be martyred rather than run before them. The schoolmaster came to his rescue and he returned home to his mother.

During three months, the tall workman, Philip, frequently passed La Blanchotte's house, and sometimes he ventured to speak to her when he saw her sewing near the window. She answered him civilly, always sedately, never joking with him, nor permitting him to enter her house. Notwithstanding, being, like all men, rather conceited, he imagined that her cheeks were often rosier than usual when she chatted with him.

But a lost reputation is so difficult to regain and always remains so fragile that, in spite of the cold reserve of La Blanchotte, the women already gossiped in the neighborhood.

As for Simon, he loved his new papa very much, and walked with him nearly every evening when the day's work was done. He went regularly to school, and mingled with great dignity with his schoolfellows without ever answering them back.

One day, however, the lad who had first attacked him said to him:

"You have told a lie. You have not a papa named Philip."

"Why do you say that?" demanded Simon, much disturbed.

The youth rubbed his hands.

"Because if you had one he would be your mamma's husband," he replied.

Simon was confused by the truth of this reasoning; nevertheless, he retorted:

"He is my papa, all the same."

"That may be," exclaimed the urchin with a sneer, "but that is not being your papa altogether."

La Blanchotte's boy bowed his head and went off dreaming in the direction of the forge belonging to old Loizon, where Philip worked.

This forge seemed fairly buried beneath trees. It was very dark there; the red glare of a formidable furnace alone illumined with great flashes five blacksmiths, who hammered upon their anvils with a terrible clamor. They were standing enveloped in flame, like demons, their eyes fixed on the red-hot iron they were pounding; and their dull thoughts rose and fell with their hammers.

Simon entered without being noticed, and went quietly to pluck his friend by the sleeve. Philip turned round. All at once the work came to a standstill, and all the men looked on, very attentive. Then, in the midst of this unaccustomed silence, rose the little slender pipe of Simon:

"Philip, explain to me what the lad at La

Michande has just said to me, that you are not altogether my papa."

"And why that?" asked the smith.

The child replied in all innocence:

"Because you are not my mamma's husband."

No one laughed. Philip remained standing, leaning his forehead upon the back of his great hands, which supported the handle of his hammer standing upright upon the anvil. He mused. His four companions watched him, and Simon, a tiny mite among these giants, anxiously waited. Suddenly, one of the smiths, answering to the sentiment of all, said to Philip:

"La Blanchotte is a good, honest girl, upright and steady in spite of her misfortune, and would make a good wife for an honest man."

"That is true," remarked the three others.

The smith continued:

"Is it the girl's fault if she went wrong? She had been promised marriage; and I know more than one who is much respected to-day, and who sinned quite as much as she."

"That is true," repeated the three men.

He resumed:

"How hard she has toiled, poor thing, to bring up her child all alone, and how she has wept all these years that she never has gone out except to church, God only knows."

"That is true also," said the others.

Nothing was heard but the bellows fanning the

furnace fire. Philip hastily bent down to Simon:

"Go and tell your mother that I am coming to speak to her this evening."

Then he pushed the boy out by the shoulders. He returned to his work, and as with a single blow the five hammers again fell upon their anvils. Thus they wrought the iron until nightfall, strong, powerful, happy, like contented hammers. But just as the great bell of the cathedral resounds upon feast days above the jingling of the other bells, so Philip's hammer, sounding above the rest, clanged second after second with a deafening uproar. And he stood amid the flying sparks plying his trade vigorously.

The sky was sown with stars as he knocked at La Blanchotte's door. He had on his Sunday blouse, a clean shirt, and his beard was trimmed. The young woman showed herself upon the threshold, and said in a grieved tone:

"It is not well to come thus after night has fallen, Monsieur Philip."

He wished to answer, but stammered and stood confused before her.

She resumed:

"You understand, do you not, that it will not do for me to be talked about again."

Then Philip said suddenly: "What does that matter to me, if you will be my wife!"

No voice replied, but he believed that he heard in the shadow of the room the sound of a falling body.

He entered quickly; and Simon, who had gone to his bed, distinguished the sound of a kiss and some words that his mother murmured softly. Then, suddenly, he found himself lifted by the hands of his friend, who, holding him at the length of his herculean arms, exclaimed:

"You will tell them, your schoolmates, that your papa is Philip Rémy, the blacksmith, and that he will pull the ears of all who do you any harm."

The next day, when the school was full and lessons were about to begin, little Simon stood up, quite pale, with trembling lips:

"My papa," said he in a clear voice, "is Philip Rémy, the blacksmith, and he has promised to pull the ears of all who do me any harm."

This time no one laughed, for Philip Rémy, the blacksmith, was very well known, and was a papa of whom anyone in the world might have been proud.

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

THE girl was one of those pretty and attractive young creatures who sometimes are born, as if by an error of destiny, in a family of clerks. She had no dot, no expectations, no way of being known, understood, loved and married, by a rich and distinguished man; so she allowed herself to be married to a humble clerk in the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly because she could not dress handsomely, but she was as unhappy as if she had really sunk from a higher station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank, for beauty, grace, and charm take the place of family and high birth. Natural delicacy, an instinct for what is elegant, suppleness of wit, are the only hierarchy, and they often make from women of the people the equals of the greatest ladies.

Mathilde suffered continually, feeling that she was born to enjoy all delicacies and all luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her home, from the barrenness of the walls, the shabby chairs, the

ugliness of the curtains. All those things, of which another woman of her rank never would even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton peasant-girl who did her humble household tasks aroused in her despairing regrets and distracted dreams. She thought of silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, illumined by tall bronze candelabra, and of two great footmen in knee-breeches who sleep in big armchairs, made drowsy by the heavy warmth of the stove. She thought of long salons hung with ancient silk, of delicate furniture bearing priceless curiosities, and of the coquettish perfumed boudoirs made for little chats at five o'clock with intimate friends, with men famous and sought after, whom all women envy and whose attentions they all desire.

When she sat down to dinner, before the round table covered with a tablecloth three days used, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup-tureen, and declared with a delighted air, "Ah, the good soup! I don't know anything better than that," she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry that peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvelous plates, and of the whispered gallantries to which you listen with a sphinx-like smile, while you are eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no gowns, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that; she felt she was made for that. She would have liked so much to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after.

She had a friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, who was rich, and whom she did not like to go to see any more, because she suffered so much when she came home.

But, one evening her husband arrived home with a triumphant air, holding out a large envelope.

"There," said he, "is something for you."

She opened the paper quickly, and drew out a printed card, which bore these words:

"The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame Georges Ramponneau request the honor of M. and Madame Loisel's company at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation on the table with disdain, murmuring:

"What do you wish me to do with that?"

"Why, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had great trouble to get it. Every one desires to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole official world will be there."

She looked at him with an irritated glance, and said impatiently:

"And what do you wish me to put on my back?"

He had not thought of that; he stammered:

"Why, the gown you go to the theater in. It looks very well to me."

He stopped, distracted, seeing that his wife was weeping. Two great tears ran slowly from the corners of her eyes toward the corners of her mouth.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" he answered.

By a violent effort she conquered her grief, and replied, with a calm voice, while she wiped her cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no gown, and, therefore, I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I."

He was in despair. He resumed:

"Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable gown, which you could use on other occasions—something very simple?"

She reflected several seconds, making her calculations and wondering also what sum she could ask without drawing on herself an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally she replied hesitatingly:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs."

He grew a little pale, because he was laying aside just that amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of

Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks there of a Sunday. But he said:

"Very well. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty gown."

The day of the ball drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her frock was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter? Come, you have seemed very queer these last three days."

And she answered:

"It annoys me not to have a single jewel, not a single stone, nothing to put on. I shall look poverty-stricken. I should almost rather not go at all."

"You might wear natural flowers," said her husband. "They're very stylish at this time of the year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich."

"How stupid you are!" her husband cried. "Go look up your friend Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're intimate enough with her to do that."

She uttered a cry of joy:

"True! I never thought of it."

The next day she went to her friend and told of her distress.

Madame Forestier went to a wardrobe with a

glass door, took out a large jewel box, brought it back, opened it, and said to Madame Loisel:

"Choose, my dear."

She saw first some bracelets; then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross of gold and precious stones, of admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the mirror, hesitated, but could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

"Haven't you any more?"

"Why, yes. Look further; I don't know what you like."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb diamond necklace, and her heart throbbed with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it around her throat, outside her high-necked waist, and was lost in ecstasy at sight of herself.

Then she asked, hesitatingly:

"Will you lend me this, only this?"

"Why, yes, certainly."

She threw her arms round her friend's neck, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The night of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel made a great success. She was prettier than any other woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling, and intoxicated with joy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, endeavored to be introduced. All the attachés of the Cabinet wished to waltz with her. She was remarked by the Minister himself.

She danced with rapture, with passion, made drunk by pleasure, forgetting all, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a cloud of happiness composed of all this homage, admiration, awakened desires, and that sense of triumph which is so sweet to woman's heart.

She left the ball about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight, in a little deserted anteroom, with three other gentlemen whose wives were enjoying the ball.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps he had brought, the modest wraps of common life, the poverty of which contrasted with the elegance of the ball-dress. She felt this, and wished to escape so as not to be remarked by the other women, who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back, saying: "Wait a bit. You will take cold outside. I will call a cab."

But she did not listen to him, and rapidly descended the stairs. When they reached the street they could not find a carriage, and began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen passing at a distance.

They went toward the Seine, in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient night cabs which, as if they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day, are never seen round Paris until after dark.

It took them to their dwelling in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly they climbed up homeward. All

was ended, for her. As to him, he reflected that he must be at the Ministry at ten o'clock that morning.

She removed her wraps before the glass so as to see herself once more in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She no longer had the necklace round her neck!

"What is the matter with you?" demanded her husband, already half undressed.

She turned madly toward him.

"I have—I have—I've lost Madame Forestier's necklace," she cried.

He stood up, distracted.

"What!—How?—Impossible!"

They looked among the folds of her skirt, of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere, but did not find it.

"You're sure you had it on when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the palace."

"But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes, probably. Did you take his number?"

"No. And you—didn't you notice it?"

"No."

They looked, thunderstruck, at each other. At last Loisel put on his clothes.

"I shall go back on foot," said he, "over the whole route, to see whether I can find it."

He went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her

ball-dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without fire, without a thought.

Her husband returned about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to police headquarters, to the newspaper offices, to offer a reward; he went to the cab companies—everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least spark of hope.

She waited all day, in the same condition of mad fear before this terrible calamity.

Loisel returned at night with a hollow, pale face; he had discovered nothing.

"You must write to your friend," said he, "that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn round."

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope. Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

"We must consider how to replace the necklace."

The next day they took the box that had contained it, and went to the jeweler whose name was found within. He consulted his books.

"It was not I, Madame, who sold that necklace; I must simply have furnished the case."

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, searching for a necklace like the other, consulting their memories, both sick with chagrin and anguish

They found, in a shop at the Palais Royal, a string of diamonds that seemed to them exactly like

the one they had lost. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

So they begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days yet. And they made a bargain that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs, in case they should find the lost necklace before the end of February.

Loisel had eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, entered into ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked his signature without even knowing whether he could meet its promise; and, frightened by the trouble yet to come, by the black misery that was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and moral tortures that he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, laying upon the jeweler's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel took back the necklace, Madame Forestier said to her, with a chilly manner:

"You should have returned it sooner; I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, as her friend had so much feared. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Madame Loisel for a thief?

Thereafter Madame Loisel knew the horrible existence of the needy. She bore her part, however, with sudden heroism. That dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret.

She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious cares of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her dainty fingers and rosy nails on greasy pots and pans. She washed the soiled linen, the shirts, and the dishcloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping for breath at every landing. And, dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, a basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, defending her pitiful money sou by sou.

Every month they had to meet some notes, renew others, obtain more time.

Her husband worked evenings, making a fair copy of some tradesman's accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.

This life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything, everything, with the rates of usury and the accumulations of compound interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households—

strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew, and red hands, she talked loud while washing a floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window, and she thought of that gay evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so beautiful and so admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? How strange and changeful is life! How little a thing is needed for us to be lost or saved!

But, one Sunday, having gone to take a walk in the Champs Elysées to refresh herself from the labors of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman who was leading a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Madame Loisel felt moved. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all about it. Why not?

She went up.

"Good day, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be familiarly addressed by this plain good-wife, did not recognize her at all, and stammered:

"But—Madame!—I do not know—— You must have mistaken."

"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!"

"Yes, I have had days hard enough, since I have seen you, days wretched enough—and that because of you!"

"Of me! How so?"

"Do you remember that diamond necklace you loaned me to wear at the ministerial ball?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another exactly like it. And for this we have been ten years paying. You can understand that it was not easy for us, us who had nothing. At last it is ended, and I am glad."

Madame Forestier had stopped.

"You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?"

"Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very like."

And she smiled with a joy that was at once proud and naïve.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste! It was worth at most only five hundred francs!"

DUCHOUX

BARON DE MORDIANE kept his fur coat unbuttoned when he descended the wide staircase of the club, which was over-heated by a stove, and when he reached the street a shiver ran over him, one of those that come when the system is depressed. For he had lost money and his digestion had troubled him for some time, so that he could not eat what he enjoyed.

He returned to his own residence; and suddenly the thought of his great, empty apartment, of his footman asleep in the ante-chamber, of the dressing-room in which the water was kept warm for his evening toilet on a gas stove, and the large, antique, solemn-looking bed like a mortuary couch, caused another chill to penetrate his whole being.

For some years past he had felt that load of solitude which sometimes crushes old bachelors. Formerly, he had been strong, lively, and gay, giving his days to sport and his nights to festive gatherings. Now, he had grown dull, and no longer took pleasure in anything. Exercise fa-

tigued him; suppers and even dinners made him ill; women annoyed him as much as they had formerly amused him.

The monotony of evenings all alike, of always meeting the same friends in the same place, at the club, of the same game with a good hand and a run of luck, of the same talk on the same topics, of the same witty remarks by the same lips, of the same jokes on the same themes, of the same scandals about the same women, disgusted him and made him feel at times a strong inclination to commit suicide. He could not lead this regular, inane life, commonplace, frivolous and dull, and he felt a longing for something tranquil, restful, comfortable, without knowing what.

He certainly did not think of marrying, for he feared he had not sufficient fortitude to submit to that melancholy conjugal servitude, to that hateful existence of two beings who, always together, know each other so well that one cannot utter a word which the other would not anticipate, could not make a single movement which would not be foreseen, could not have any thought, desire, or opinion that would not be divined. He considered that a woman was interesting only when you knew her but slightly, when there is something mysterious and unexplored about her, when she remains an enigma, hidden behind a veil. What he would desire would be a family without family life, wherein he might spend only a portion of his exist-

ence. But he was also haunted by the recollection of his son.

For the past year, he had been constantly thinking of this, feeling an irritating desire springing up within him. He had become the father of this child while still a young man, in the midst of dramatic and touching incidents. The boy, sent to the South, had been brought up near Marseilles without ever hearing his father's name.

He had at first paid for the child from month to month, for his nurture, education, and the expense of holidays, and finally had provided an allowance for him on his making a sensible match. A discreet notary had acted as intermediary, without ever disclosing anything.

The Baron de Mordiane accordingly knew merely that a child of his was living somewhere in the neighborhood of Marseilles, that he was looked upon as intelligent and well-educated, and that he had married the daughter of an architect and contractor to whose business he had succeeded. He was also believed to be wealthy.

Why should he not go and see this unknown son without telling his name, in order to form an opinion about him, and to assure himself whether, in case of necessity, he might find an agreeable refuge in this family.

He had acted handsomely toward the young man, had settled a good fortune on him, which had been thankfully accepted. He was, therefore, certain

that he would not find himself clashing against any inordinate sense of self-importance; and this desire of setting out for the South, which was renewed each day, acted like a kind of irritant. A strange, selfish feeling of affection also attracted him as he pictured this pleasant, warm abode by the seaside, where he would meet his young and pretty daughter-in-law, his grandchildren with outstretched arms, and his son, who would recall to his memory the charming and short-lived adventure of bygone years. He regretted only having given so much money, and that this money had prospered in the young man's hands, thus preventing him from any longer presenting himself in the character of a benefactor.

He hurried along with the collar of his fur coat turned up, his mind full of all these thoughts. Suddenly he made up his mind. A cab was passing; he hailed it, drove home, and, when his valet, just roused from a nap, had opened the door, he said:

"Louis, we set out to-morrow evening for Marseilles. We shall remain there perhaps a fortnight. You will make all the necessary preparations."

The train rushed on past the Rhône with its sand-banks, then through yellow plains, bright villages, and a wide expanse of country, shut in by bare mountains, which rose on the distant horizon.

The Baron de Mordiane, after a night spent in a sleeping compartment, looked at himself, in a melancholy fashion, in the little mirror of his dress-

ing-case. The glaring sun of the South showed him some wrinkles which he had not observed before—a condition of decrepitude unnoticed in the imperfect light of Parisian rooms. He thought, as he examined the corners of his eyes, and saw the wrinkled lids, the temples, the skinny forehead:

"Damn it! not merely is the gloss taken off—I've become quite a regular fossil."

And his desire for rest suddenly increased, with a vague yearning, born in him for the first time, to take his grandchildren on his knees.

About one o'clock in the afternoon the Baron arrived in a landau, which he had hired at Marseilles, at the gate of one of those houses of Southern France so dazzlingly white, at the end of their avenues of plane-trees, that they almost blind one at first. He smiled as he pursued his way along the avenue leading to the house, and reflected:

"Deuce take it! this is a nice place."

Suddenly, a young rogue of five or six darted out of the shrubbery, and remained standing at the side of the path, staring at the gentleman.

Mordiane went over to him.

"Good morning, my boy."

The child made no reply.

The Baron, stooping, took him up in his arms to kiss him, but the smell of garlic with which the child seemed impregnated almost suffocated him, and he quickly put him down again, muttering:

"Oh! it is the gardener's son."

And he proceeded toward the house.

The linen was hanging out on a line before the door—shirts and chemises, napkins, dish-cloths, aprons, and sheets, while a row of socks, hanging from strings one above the other, filled up an entire window, like sausages exposed for sale in front of a pork-butcher's shop.

The Baron announced his arrival. A servant-girl apeared, a true servant of the South, dirty and untidy, with her hair hanging in wisps over her face, while her petticoat, under the accumulation of stains that had soiled it, retained only a certain uncouth remnant of its former color, and might have done for the particolored suit of a clown.

He asked:

"Is Monsieur Duchoux at home?"

Many years ago, in the mocking spirit of a cynical man of pleasure, he had given this name to the foundling in order that it might not be forgotten that he had been picked up under a cabbage.

The servant-girl asked:

"Do you want Monsieur Duchoux?"

"Yes."

"Well, he is in the big room, drawing some plans."

"Tell him that Monsieur Merlin wishes to speak to him."

She replied, in amazement:

"Hey! go inside then, if you want to see him."

And she bawled out:

"Mo'sieur Duchoux—a caller."

The Baron entered, and in a spacious apartment, darkened by the windows being half-closed, he indistinctly traced out persons and things that appeared to him very slovenly.

Standing in front of a table laden with articles of every sort, a little bald man was tracing lines on a large sheet of paper.

He interrupted his work, and advanced two steps. His waistcoat left open, his unbuttoned breeches, and his turned-up shirt-sleeves, indicated that he felt hot, and his muddy shoes showed that it had been raining hard for some days. He asked with a very broad Southern accent:

"Whom have I the honor of——?"

"Monsieur Merlin; I came to consult you about the purchase of a building-lot."

"Ha! ha! that is good."

And Duchoux, turning toward his wife, who was knitting in the shade, said:

"Clear off a chair, Josephine."

Mordiane then saw a young woman, who appeared prematurely old, as women look old at twenty-five in the provinces, for want of attention to their persons, of regular baths, and all the little cares bestowed on the feminine toilet that freshen and preserve, till the age of fifty, the charm and beauty of the sex. With a kerchief over her shoulders, her hair clumsily braided—though it was lovely hair, thick and black, one could see that it

was badly brushed—she stretched out hands like those of a servant, and removed an infant's robe, a knife, a fag-end of packthread, an empty flower-pot, and a greasy plate left on the seat of a chair, which she then moved over toward the visitor.

He sat down, and presently noticed that Duchoux's work-table had on it, in addition to the books and papers, two lettuces recently gathered, a wash-basin, a hair-brush, a napkin, a revolver, and cups that had not been washed.

The architect perceived this look, and said with a smile:

"Excuse us! The room is rather untidy—owing to the children."

And he drew over his chair in order to chat with his client.

"So you are looking out for a piece of ground in the neighborhood of Marseilles?"

His breath carried toward the Baron that odor of garlic which the people of the South exhale as flowers shed their perfume.

Mordiane asked:

"Is it your son that I met under the plane-trees?"

"Yes. Yes, the second."

"You have two of them?"

"Three, Monsieur, one a year."

And Duchoux looked full of pride.

The Baron was thinking to himself:

"If they all have the same perfume, their nursery

must be a real conservatory." Then he continued:

"Yes, I should like a nice piece of ground near the sea, on a little solitary strip of beach——"

Thereupon Duchoux proceeded to explain. He had ten, twenty, fifty, a hundred, or more, pieces of ground of the kind required, at different prices and suited to different tastes. He talked as a fountain flows, smiling, self-satisfied, wagging his bald round head.

And Mordiane was reminded of a little woman, fair-haired, slight, with a somewhat melancholy look, and a tender fashion of murmuring, "My darling," the mere remembrance of which stirred the blood in his veins. She had loved him passionately, madly, for three months; then, becoming *enceinte* in the absence of her husband, who was governor of a colony, she had run away and concealed herself, distracted with despair and terror, till the birth of the child, which Mordiane carried off one summer evening, and which they had not seen afterward.

She died of consumption three years later, in the colony of which her husband was governor, whither she had gone to join him. And here before him was their son, who was saying, in metallic tones, as he rang out his closing words:

"This piece of ground, Monsieur, is a rare bargain——"

And Mordiane recalled the other voice, light as the touch of a gentle breeze, as it used to murmur:

My darling, we shall never part——"

And he remembered the soft, deep, devoted glance in those blue eyes, as he watched the round, vacant eyes, though also blue, of this ridiculous little man, who, in spite of all, bore a resemblance to his mother.

Yes, he looked more like her every moment—like her in accent, in movement, in his entire deportment. He resembled her, but as an ape resembles a man. Still he was hers; he displayed a thousand external characteristics peculiar to her, though in a distorted, irritating, and revolting form.

The Baron was galled, haunted as he was all of a sudden by this resemblance, horrible, each instant growing stronger, exasperating, maddening, torturing him like a nightmare, like a weight of remorse.

He stammered out:

"When can we look at this piece of ground together?"

"Why, to-morrow, if you like."

"Well, yes, to-morrow. At what hour?"

"One o'clock."

"Very well."

The child he had met in the avenue appeared before the open door, exclaiming:

"Dada!"

There was no answer.

Mordiane had risen with a longing to run away, which made his legs tremble. This "dada" had hit him like a bullet. It was to *him* that it was ad-

dressed, it was intended for him, this "dada," smelling of garlic, this "dada" of the South!

Oh! how sweet had been the perfume exhaled by her, his sweetheart of bygone days!

Duchoux saw him to the door.

"This house is your own?" said the Baron.

"Yes, Monsieur; I bought it recently. And I am proud of it. I am a child of accident, Monsieur, and I don't care to hide it. I am proud of it. I owe nothing to any one; I am the son of my own efforts; I owe everything to myself."

The little boy, who remained on the threshold kept on exclaiming, though at some distance:

"Dada!"

Mordiane, shaking as with a chill, seized with panic, fled as one flees from a great danger.

"He is about to guess who I am, to recognize me," he thought. "He is about to take me in his arms, and call out to me 'dada' while giving me a kiss perfumed with garlic."

"To-morrow, Monsieur."

"To-morrow, at one o'clock."

The landau rolled over the white road.

"Coachman! to the railway-station!"

And he heard two voices, one far-away and sweet, the faint, sad voice of the dead, saying: "My darling," and the other sonorous, sing-song, frightful, bawling out, "Dada," just as people bawl out "Stop him!" when a thief is flying through the street.

Next evening as he entered the club, the Count d'Etreillis said to him:

"We have not seen you for the last three days. Have you been ill?"

"Yes, a little indisposed. I get these headaches from time to time."

TIMBUCTOO

THAT river of humanity, the boulevard, was alive with people in the golden light of the setting sun. The sky was red, blinding; and behind the Madeleine a great bank of flaming clouds cast a shower of light the whole length of the boulevard, vibrant as the heat from a brazier.

The gay, animated crowd went by in this golden mist, and appeared to be glorified. Their faces were gilded, their black hats and clothes took on purple tints, the patent leather on their shoes cast bright reflections on the asphalt of the sidewalk.

Before the cafés a mass of men were drinking opalescent liquids that looked like precious stones dissolved in the glasses.

In the midst of them two officers in uniform dazzled all eyes with their glittering gold lace. They chatted, happy without asking why, in this glory of life, in this radiant light of sunset, and they looked at the crowd, the leisurely men and the hurrying women, who left a bewildering odor of perfume as they passed by.

All at once an enormous negro, dressed in black,

with a paunch beneath his jean waistcoat, which was covered with charms, his face shining as if it had been polished, passed before them with a triumphant air. He laughed at the passers-by, at the news vendors, at the dazzling sky, at all Paris. He was so tall that he overtopped every one else, and when he had passed all the loungers turned round to look at his back.

But he suddenly perceived the officers, and darted toward them, jostling the drinkers in his path. As soon as he reached their table he fixed his delighted eyes upon them, and his mouth expanded to his ears, showing his dazzling white teeth like a crescent moon in a black sky. The two men looked in astonishment at this ebony giant, unable to understand his delight.

With a voice that made the guests laugh, he said:

"Good day, my Lieutenant."

One of the officers was commander of a battalion, the other was a colonel. The former said:

"I do not know you, sir; I am at a loss to know what you want of me."

"We like you much, Lieutenant Védié, siege of Bézi, much grapes, find me."

The officer, bewildered, looked at the man intently, trying to refresh his memory; then he exclaimed abruptly:

"Timbuctoo?"

The negro, radiant, slapped his thigh as he uttered a tremendous laugh and roared:

"Yes, yes, my Lieutenant, you remember Timbuctoo! Ya, how do you do?"

The commandant held out his hand, laughing heartily. Then Timbuctoo became serious, seized the officer's hand, and, before the other could prevent it, he kissed it, according to negro and Arab custom. The officer, embarrassed, said in a severe tone:

"Come, now, Timbuctoo, we are not in Africa. Sit down there and tell me how it is that I find you here."

Timbuctoo swelled himself out and, his words falling over one another, replied hurriedly:

"I make much money, much, big restaurant, good food, Prussians, me much steal, much, French cooking, Timbuctoo, cook to the Emperor, two thousand francs mine. Ha! ha! ha!"

And he laughed, doubling himself up, roaring, with wild delight in his glances.

When the officer, who understood his manner of expressing himself, had questioned him, he said:

"Well, *au revoir,* Timbuctoo. I will see you again."

The negro rose, this time shaking the hand that was extended to him, and, smiling still, said:

"Good day, my Lieutenant!"

He went off, so happy that he gesticulated as he walked, and people thought he was crazy.

"Who is that brute?" asked the Colonel.

"A fine fellow and a brave soldier. I will tell

you what I know about him. It is funny enough.

"You know that at the beginning of the war of 1870 I was shut up in Bezières, which this negro called Bézi. We were not besieged, but blockaded. The Prussian lines surrounded us, outside the reach of cannon, not firing on us, but slowly starving us out.

"I was then lieutenant. Our garrison consisted of all descriptions of soldiers, fragments of slaughtered regiments, some that had run away, and freebooters separated from the main army. We had all kinds—in fact, even eleven—Turcos (Algerian soldiers in the service of France), who arrived one evening no one knew whence or how. They appeared at the gates of the city, exhausted, in rags, starving and dirty, and were handed over to me.

"I saw very soon that they were quite undisciplined, always in the street, and always drunk. I tried putting them in the guard-house, even in prison, but nothing was of any use. They would disappear, sometimes for days at a time, as if they had been swallowed up by the earth, and then come back beastly drunk. They had no money. Where did they buy drink? And how, and with what?

"This began to worry me greatly, all the more as these savages interested me with their everlasting laugh and the characteristics of overgrown, frolicsome children.

"I then noticed that they implicitly obeyed the largest among them, the one you have just seen.

He made them do as he pleased, and planned their mysterious expeditions with the undisputed authority of a leader. I sent for him and questioned him. Our conversation lasted three hours, for it was hard for me to understand his remarkable gibberish. As for him, poor devil, he made strenuous efforts to render himself intelligible, invented words, gesticulated, perspired in his anxiety, mopping his forehead, puffing, stopping, and abruptly beginning again when he thought he had formed some new method of explaining what he wanted to say.

"I understood, finally, that he was the son of a big chief, a sort of negro king of the region around Timbuctoo. I asked his name. He repeated something like *Chavaharibouhalikramapotapolara.* It seemed simpler to me to give him the name of his native place, Timbuctoo. And a week later he was known by no other name in the garrison.

"But we were all wildly anxious to find out where this African ex-prince procured his drinks. I discovered it in a singular way.

"I was on the ramparts one morning, watching the horizon, when I perceived something moving about in a vineyard. It was near the time of vintage, the grapes were ripe, but I was not thinking of that. I though a spy was approaching the town, and I organized a complete expedition to catch the prowler. I took command myself, after obtaining permission from the general.

"I sent out by three different gates three little

companies, which were to meet at the suspected vineyard and form a cordon round it. To cut off the spy's retreat, one of these detachments had to make at least an hour's march. A watch on the walls signaled to me that the person I had seen had not left the place. We went along in profound silence, creeping along the paths. At last we reached the spot assigned.

"I abruptly disbanded my soldiers, who darted into the vineyard, and found—Timbuctoo, on hands and knees, traveling round among the vines and eating grapes, or, rather, devouring them as a dog eats his sop, snatching them in mouthfuls from the vine with his teeth.

"I wanted him to get up, but he could not think of it. I then understood why he was crawling on his hands and knees. As soon as we stood him on his feet he began to wabble, then stretched out his arms and fell down on his nose. He was more drunk than I have ever seen any one.

"They brought him home on two poles. He never stopped laughing all the way back, gesticulating with his arms and legs.

"This explained the mystery. My men also drank the juice of the grapes, and when they were thoroughly intoxicated they went to sleep in the vineyard. As for Timbuctoo, his love of the vineyard was beyond all belief and all bounds. He lived in it as did the thrushes, which he hated with the jealous hatred of a rival. He assured me:

" 'The thrushes eat all the grapes, Captain!'

"One evening I was sent for. Something had been seen on the plain coming in our direction. I had not brought my field-glass, and I could not distinguish things clearly. It looked like a great serpent uncoiling itself—a convoy, how could I tell?

"I sent some men to meet this strange caravan, which presently made its triumphal entry. Timbuctoo and nine comrades were carrying, on a sort of altar made of camp stools, eight grinning and bleeding heads. The African was dragging along a horse to whose tail another head was fastened, and six other animals followed, adorned in the same manner.

"This is what I learned. Having set out for the vineyard, my Africans had suddenly perceived a detachment of Prussians approaching a village. Instead of taking to their heels they hid themselves, and as soon as the Prussian officers dismounted at an inn to refresh themselves, the ten rascals rushed on them, put to flight the lancers, who thought they were being attacked by the main army, and killed the two sentries, then the Colonel and the five officers of his escort.

"That day I kissed Timbuctoo. I saw, however, that he walked with difficulty, and I thought he was wounded. He laughed and said:

" 'Me, provisions for my country.'

"Timbuctoo was not fighting for glory, but for gain. Everything he found that seemed to him to be of the slightest value, especially anything that

glistened, he put into his pocket. What a pocket! An abyss that began at his hips and reached to his ankles. He had retained an old term used by the troopers, and called it his *profonde,* and it was his *profonde,* in fact!

"He had taken the gold lace off the Prussian uniforms, the brass off their helmets, detached their buttons, and thrown them all into his *profonde,* which was full to overflowing.

"Each day he pocketed every glistening object that he saw: pieces of tin or pieces of silver, and sometimes his contour was very comical.

"He intended to carry all that back to the land of ostriches, whose brother he might have been, this son of a king, tormented with the longing to gobble up all objects that glistened. If he had not had his *profonde,* what would he have done? Doubtless he would have swallowed them.

"Every morning his pocket was empty. He had, then, some general store where his riches were hidden. But where? I could not discover it.

"The General, on being informed of Timbuctoo's mighty act of valor, had the headless bodies that had been left in the neighboring village interred at once, that it might not be discovered that they were decapitated. The Prussians returned thither the following day. The Mayor and seven prominent inhabitants were shot on the spot, by way of reprisal, as having denounced the Prussians.

"Winter arrived. We were exhausted and des-

perate. There were skirmishes every day. The famished men could no longer march. The eight 'Turcos' alone (three had been killed) remained fat, shiny, vigorous, and always ready to fight. Timbuctoo was even getting fatter. He said to me one day:

" 'You much hungry, me good meat.'

"And he brought me an excellent *filet*. But of what? We had no more cattle, nor sheep, nor goats, nor donkeys, nor pigs. It was impossible to find a horse. I thought of all this after I had devoured my meat. Then a horrible idea came to me. These negroes were born close to a country where human beings are eaten! And each day a number of soldiers were killed around the town. I questioned Timbuctoo. He would not answer. I did not insist, but from that time I declined his presents.

"He worshiped me. One night snow took us by surprise at the outposts. We were seated on the ground. I looked with pity at those poor negroes, shivering beneath the white, frozen shower. I was very cold and began to cough. At once I felt something fall on me, like a large warm quilt. It was Timbuctoo's cape, which he had thrown over my shoulders.

"I rose and returned his garment, saying:

" 'Keep it, my boy; you need it more than I.'

" 'No, my Lieutenant, for you; me no need, me hot, hot!'

"And he looked at me entreatingly,

" 'Come, obey orders! Keep your cape. I insist,' I repeated.

"He stood up, drew his sword, which he had sharpened to an edge like a scythe, and, holding in his other hand the large cape which I had refused, said:

" 'If you not keep cape, me cut; no one cape.'

"And he would have done it. So I yielded.

"Eight days later we capitulated. Some of us had escaped. The rest were to march out of the town and give themselves up to the conquerors.

"I went toward the parade ground, where we were all to meet, when I was dumbfounded at the sight of a gigantic negro dressed in white duck and wearing a straw hat in front of a little shop where two plates and two glasses were displayed. It was Timbuctoo.

" 'What are you doing?' I asked.

" 'Me not go, me good cook, me make food for Colonel, Algeria; me eat Prussians, much steal, much.'

"There were ten degrees of frost. I shivered at sight of this negro in white duck. He took me by the arm and led me inside. I noticed a large flag that he intended to place outside his door as soon as we had left, for he had some shame. I read this sign, traced by the hand of an accomplice:

" 'Army kitchen of M. Timbuctoo,
" 'Formerly cook to H. M. the Emperor.
" '*A Parisian Artist! Moderate Prices.*'

"In spite of the despair that was gnawing at my heart, I could not help laughing, and I left my negro to his new enterprise.

"Was not that better than taking him prisoner?

"You have just seen that he made a success of it, the rascal.

"Bezières to-day belongs to the Germans, and the Restaurant Timbuctoo is the beginning of a retaliation."

DENIS

MARAMBOT smiled when he opened the letter that his servant Denis gave him. For twenty years Denis had served in this house. He was short, stocky and jovial, and was known throughout the countryside as a model servant. He asked:

"Is Monsieur pleased? Has Monsieur received good news?"

M. Marambot was not rich. He was an old village druggist, a bachelor, who lived on an income acquired with difficulty by selling drugs to the farmers. He answered:

"Yes, my boy. Old man Malois is afraid of the lawsuit with which I have threatened him. I shall get my money tomorrow. Five thousand francs are not liable to harm the account of an old bachelor."

M. Marambot rubbed his hands with satisfaction. He was a man of a quiet temperament, oftener sad than gay, incapable of any prolonged effort, and careless in business.

Undoubtedly he could have amassed a greater fortune had he taken advantage of the deaths of colleagues established in more important centers, by taking their places and carrying on their business. But the trouble of moving and the thought of the necessary preparations had always stopped him. After thinking the matter over for a few days, he would say:

"Bah! I'll wait until the next time. I'll not lose anything by the delay. I may even find something better."

Denis, on the contrary, was always urging his master to new enterprises. He would continually repeat:

"Oh! If I had only had the capital to begin with, I could have made a fortune! One thousand francs would do me."

M. Marambot would smile without answering and go out into his little garden, where, with his hands behind his back, he would walk around, dreaming.

Denis sang the joyful refrains of the folk-songs of the neighborhood all day long. He even showed an unusual activity, for he cleaned all the windows of the house, energetically rubbing the glass, and singing at the top of his voice.

Several times, smiling, M. Marambot, surprised at his zeal, told him:

"My boy, if you work like that nothing will be left for you to do to-morrow."

The next day, at about nine o'clock in the morning, the postman gave Denis four letters for his master, one of them very heavy. M. Marambot immediately shut himself up in his room until late in the afternoon. He then handed his servant four letters for the mail. One of these, addressed to M. Malois, was undoubtedly a receipt for the money.

Denis asked no questions; he appeared to be as sad and gloomy that day as he had seemed joyful the day before.

Night came. M. Marambot went to bed as usual and slept.

Awakened by a strange noise, he sat up in his bed and listened. Suddenly the door opened, and Denis appeared, having in one hand a candle and in the other a carving-knife, his eyes staring, his face contracted as if moved by some deep emotion. He was as pale as a ghost.

M. Marambot, astonished, thought that he was sleep-walking, and he was going to get out of bed and assist him, when the servant blew out the light and rushed for the bed. His master stretched out his hands to receive the shock which knocked him over on his back; he was trying to seize the hands of his servant, whom he now thought to be crazy, in order to avoid the blows which the latter was aiming at him.

He was struck by the knife, once in the shoulder, once in the forehead and a third time in the

chest. He fought wildly, waving his arms around in the darkness, kicking and crying:

"Denis! Denis! Are you mad? Listen, Denis!"

But Denis, gasping for breath, kept up his furious attack, always striking, always repulsed, sometimes with a kick, sometimes with a punch, and again rushing forward furiously.

M. Marambot was wounded twice more, once in the leg and once in the stomach. But suddenly a thought flashed across his mind, and he began to shriek:

"Stop, stop, Denis. I have not yet received my money!"

The man immediately ceased, and his master could hear his labored breathing in the darkness.

M. Marambot immediately continued:

"I have received nothing. M. Malois takes back what he said, the lawsuit will take place; that is the reason you carried the letters to the mail. Just read those on my desk."

With a final effort, he reached for his matches and lighted the candle.

He was covered with blood. His sheets, his curtains, and even the walls, were spattered with red. Denis, also standing in the center of the room, was bloody from head to foot.

When he saw that, M. Marambot thought himself dead, and he fell unconscious. At break of day he revived. It was some time, however, before

he regained his senses and was able to understand or remember. But suddenly the memory of the attack and of his wounds returned to him, and he was filled with such fright that he closed his eyes, afraid to see anything. After a few minutes he grew calmer and began to think. He had not died immediately, therefore he might still recover. He was very weak; but he had no real pain, although he noticed an uncomfortable smarting sensation in several parts of his body. He also felt icy cold, and all wet, and as if wrapped up in bandages. He thought this dampness came from the loss of blood; and he shivered at the dreadful thought of the red liquid which had come from his veins and covered his bed. The fear of seeing this terrible spectacle again so upset him that he kept his eyes closed tightly, as if they might open in spite of himself.

What had become of Denis? He had probably escaped. But what could he, Marambot, do now? Get up? Call for help? But if he should make the slightest motion, his wounds would undoubtedly open again and he would die from loss of blood.

Suddenly he heard the door of his room open. His heart almost stopped. It was certainly Denis who was coming to finish him. He held his breath, in order to make the murderer think he had been successful.

He felt his sheet being lifted up, and then some one feeling his stomach. A sharp pain near his hip made him start. He was being very gently

washed with cold water. Therefore, some one must have discovered the misdeed and he was being cared for. A wild joy seized him; but prudently, he did not wish to show that he was conscious. He opened one eye, just one, with the greatest precaution.

He recognized Denis standing beside him, Denis himself! Mercy! He hastily closed his eye again.

Denis! What could he be doing? What did he want? What awful scheme could he now be carrying out?

What was he doing? Well, he was washing him in order to hide the traces of his crime! And he would now bury him in the garden, under ten feet of earth, so that no one should discover him! Or perhaps under the wine-cellar! And M. Marambot began to tremble like a leaf. He kept saying to himself: "I am lost, lost!" He closed his eyes, so as not to see the knife as it descended for the final stroke. But it did not come. Denis was now lifting him up and bandaging him. Then he began carefully to dress the wound on his leg, as his master had taught him to do.

There was no longer any doubt. His servant, after wishing to kill him, was trying to save him.

Then M. Marambot, in a dying voice, gave him this practical piece of advice:

"Wash the wounds in a dilute solution of carbolic acid!"

"That is what I am doing, Monsieur," said Denis.

M. Marambot opened both eyes. There was no sign of blood either on the bed, on the walls, or on the murderer. The wounded man was stretched out on clean white sheets.

The two men looked at each other.

Finally M. Marambot said calmly:

"You have been guilty of a great crime."

Denis answered:

"I am trying to make up for it, Monsieur. If you will not tell of it, I will serve you as faithfully as in the past."

This was no time to anger his servant. M. Marambot murmured as he closed his eyes:

"I swear not to tell."

Denis saved his master. He spent days and nights without sleep, never leaving the sick-room, preparing drugs, broths, potions, feeling his pulse, anxiously counting the beats, attending him with the skill of a trained nurse and the devotion of a son.

He was all the time asking:

"Well, Monsieur, how do you feel?"

And M. Marambot would answer in a weak voice:

"A little better, my boy, thank you."

And when the sick man woke at night, he often saw his servant seated in an arm-chair, weeping silently.

Never had the old druggist been so cared for, so fondled, so spoiled. At first he had said:

"As soon as I am well I shall get rid of this rascal."

He was now convalescing, and from day to day he put off dismissing his murderer. He thought no one would ever have such care and attentions for him, since he held this man through fear; and he warned him that he had left a document with a lawyer denouncing him to the law if any new accident should occur.

This precaution seemed to guarantee him against any future attack; and he then asked himself whether it would not be wiser to keep this man near him, and watch him closely.

Just as formerly, when he hesitated about taking some more important store, he could not make up his mind to any decision.

"There is always time," he would say.

Denis continued to show himself an admirable servant. M. Marambot was well. He kept him.

One morning, as he was finishing breakfast, he suddenly heard a great noise in the kitchen. He hastened in there. Denis was struggling with two gendarmes. An officer was taking notes on his pad.

As soon as he saw his master, the servant began to sob, exclaiming:

"You told, Monsieur; that's not right, after what you had promised me. You have broken your word of honor, Monsieur Marambot; that's not right."

M. Marambot, bewildered and distressed at being suspected, lifted his hand:

"I swear to you before the Lord, my boy, that I did not tell. I haven't the slightest idea how the police could have found out about your attack on me."

The officer started:

"You say that he attacked you, Monsieur?"

The bewildered druggist answered:

"Yes—but I did not tell of it—I haven't said a word—I swear it—he has served me excellently ever since——"

The officer said severely:

"I will take down your testimony. The law will take notice of this new action, of which it was ignorant, Monsieur Marambot. I was commissioned to arrest your servant for the theft of two ducks lately stolen by him from Monsieur Duhamel, for which action there are witnesses. I shall take notice of your information."

"Then, turning to his men, he said:

"Come on, bring him along!"

The two gendarmes dragged Denis out.

The lawyer used a plea of insanity, contrasting the two misdeeds in order to strengthen his argument. He had clearly proved that the theft of the two ducks came from the same mental condition as the eight knife-wounds in the body of Marambot. He had cunningly analyzed all the phases of this transitory condition of mental aberration, which doubtless, could be cured by a few months' treatment in a reputable sanitarium. He had spoken

in enthusiastic terms of the continued devotion of this faithful servant, of the care with which he had protected his master, wounded by him in a moment of alienation.

Touched by this memory, M. Marambot felt the tears rising to his eyes.

The lawyer noticed it, opened his arms with a broad gesture, spreading out the long black sleeves of his robe like the wings of a bat, and exclaimed:

"Look, look, gentlemen of the jury, look at those tears. What more can I say for my client? What speech, what argument, what reasoning would be worth these tears of his master? They speak louder than I, louder than the law; they cry: 'Mercy for the poor wandering mind!' They implore, they pardon, they bless!"

He was silent and sat down.

Then the judge, turning to Marambot, whose testimony had been favorable for his servant, asked him:

"But, Monsieur, even admitting that you consider this man insane, that does not explain why you should have kept him. He was none the less dangerous."

Marambot, wiping his eyes, answered:

"Well, your honor, what can you expect? Nowadays it's so hard to find good servants—I never could have found a better one."

Denis was acquitted and sent to a sanatorium, at his master's expense.